

# Lines West – Buckeye Region Newsletter



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## Upcoming Chapter Meeting December 10

Our next chapter meeting will be held Sunday, December 10 from 12 to 3 at the Railroad Station in Urbana, Ohio. The NX23 will be on site, but not open as the original interior has been removed and has not been restored. Gary Salzgaber will open his layout following the meeting. Nearby in St. Paris, the PRR freight station has been restored and can be photographed. North in West Liberty, the NYC station has been restored and is part of a retail candy business. It also can be photographed, but will not be open.

We will have a presentation by Scott Trostel on the PRR in the Urbana area.

Bring any models or artifacts you wish to display.

## Membership Renewal

It is time to renew your membership. As you know, this fund pays the costs of the newsletters, and any expenses in holding our quarterly meetings. Chapter dues are a modest \$10 per calendar year for regular and associate membership, and \$25 for Organizational membership. So on January 1, your 2007 chapter dues will be due. If you haven't already done so, please fill out the form on page 6 and forward with a check for your dues to our Treasurer: George Bilderback, III, 326 Bear Woods Drive, Powell, OH 43065-7759. Any questions? Contact George at [ggb3@columbus.rr.com](mailto:ggb3@columbus.rr.com)

## Pennsy's Strangest Railroad

By Gene Stebbins

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During its formative years, the Pennsylvania Railroad concentrated on building new rail lines west and buying existing roads to

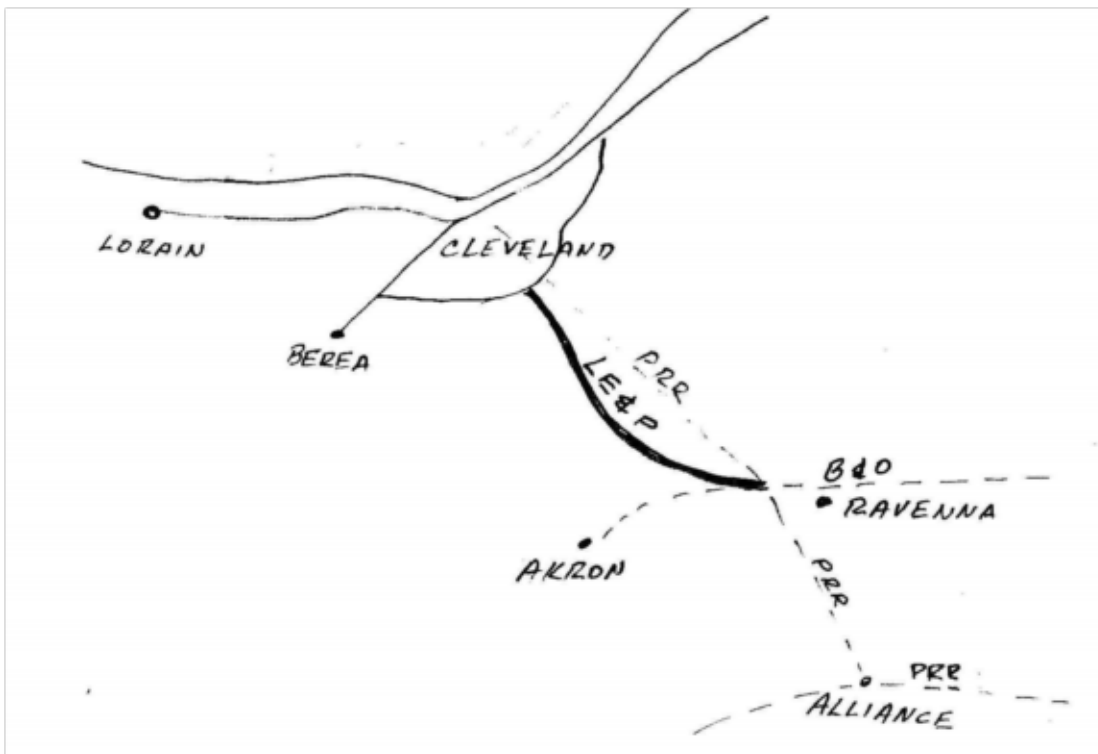
expand its reach. It achieved its goal of reaching Chicago in 1858 and St. Louis in 1870. After those two major objectives were reached, the Railroad concentrated on a different kind of expansion, buying connecting roads in its service area and buying controlling shares in other major railroads, such as the Baltimore and Ohio and the Norfolk and Western.

Among these expansion moves was a curious investment in a northern Ohio railroad, the Lake Erie and Pittsburg (the line never used an “h”), a 28-mile road from the southern environs of Cleveland to a junction with Pennsy’s Cleveland and Pittsburgh just west of Ravenna. Making this investment more curious is the fact that Pennsy owned fifty percent of the road, the other fifty percent being owned by its rival, the New York Central. And one last note of irony is that as far as can be determined, the Pennsy never ran a train on the Lake Erie and Pittsburg even though it had the right to do so.

The railroad was originally planned to run from the port of Lorain to Youngstown, carrying iron ore southeast and coal northwest. Construction began in 1904, grading an 18-mile stretch between Lorain and Berea and constructing piers to carry the rails over the Rocky River. But construction halted in October 1904 when swampy land west of Berea defied the company’s efforts to provide enough fill to construct a stable roadbed, and the projected costs skyrocketed beyond the means of the promoters.

In April 1905, the unfinished LE&P was sold to the Pennsylvania Railroad and the New York Central subsidiary Lake Shore and Michigan Southern. At the time, the Pennsy and the NYC were working together to stabilize what they saw as the overcompetitive railroad situation in Northeastern United States. Probably most of their motivation in the purchase was to keep the potential ore-hauler out of competitive hands.

For the Central, the purchase made more sense. It had no Youngstown-Cleveland or Youngstown-Lorain connections, except a long round-about way through Ashtabula, which involved surmounting a substantial grade with helpers. The “new” LE&P began at a connection with the new NYC “Shortline” (then



under construction) at a small yard called Marcy. The NYC Shortline is a bypass route across southern Cleveland connecting the Big Four route from Indianapolis and St. Louis to the Lake Shore line going to Buffalo and points east. The LE&P ran to a junction with the Pennsy just west of Ravenna. Within three miles of the Ravenna junction, NYC trains connected with the B&O to Youngstown using trackage rights granted by the Pennsy, which controlled the B&O. Other traffic continued south to Alliance and points in Southern Ohio south via trackage rights on the Pennsy. The new route paralleled the Pennsy-controlled Cleveland and Pittsburgh, joining it at Ravenna. Indeed, the LE&P was not more than four miles west of the C&P at any point.

Why such a route? The junction with the Pennsy and the Shortline just east of Marcy is in a congested area, consisting of a flyover with only an emergency connecting track. The NYC envisioned more traffic than could be readily accommodated on the C&P tracks between Cleveland and Ravenna. We can surmise it was seen by both railroads as a way of controlling competition in the lucrative ore and coal hauling business in Northeastern Ohio. The line promised to be profitable, especially to the Pennsylvania

Railroad, since the expenses were to be prorated according to usage, and the Pennsy did not plan to use it.

The line ran south from Marcy along the east bank of the Cuyahoga River, crossing several spectacular trestles bridging tributary creeks, then swung east across Summit County to cross the Cuyahoga River north of Kent, joining the PRR tracks west of Ravenna. The Ravenna junction was a flying junction, with a bridge carrying westbound traffic over the Pennsy tracks. It was a low-grade route, with the maximum grade being less than .40 percent. The Mill Creek trestle near the northern end was 866 feet, the Tinkers Creek trestle was 1303 feet, and the trestle over Brandywine Creek measured 914 feet.

The road served no major cities other than Cleveland and Ravenna, hardly much potential to generate traffic, and never hosted a passenger train except for a few detours around wreck sites. It was strictly a connecting road for the NYC. Since most roads crossed overhead on wooden “humpback” structures, it had virtually no grade crossings. Throughout its existence the LE&P was considered a part of the NYC, although it was a separate corporation with its own officers, drawn from NYC and PRR executives. Locomotives were supplied by NYC and the line had only a few pieces of rolling stock, all MOW equipment. Fulltime towers were located at Marcy (operated by NYC) and Brady Lake (near Ravenna, operated by PRR).



Tinkers Creek Trestle in the Cuyahoga River valley. A westbound train of N&W and C&O hoppers crosses in March 1957. Photo by H.H. Harwood, Jr.

The NYC used the LE&P to connect its western main lines with eastern markets, via connections onto the PRR and B&O to Youngstown, then down the Lake Erie and Pittsburgh and the Western Maryland to the Reading, all of which it controlled. It also used the LE&P to route coal trains from NYC lines in southern Ohio connecting to the PRR south of Alliance, then onto the LE&P at Ravenna for the final leg into Cleveland.

The end came quickly after the Penn Central merger. As a route paralleling a double-tracked major Pennsy line, it was one of the first to be abandoned in Penn Central’s drive to eliminate duplicate trackage, and the corporation ceased to exist in 1970. By this time, the volume of ore traffic from Cleveland to the southeast had fallen off and all Penn Central moved could be easily accommodated on the former Pennsy line from Cleveland to Alliance. Today, only short stubs remain at Marcy and Ravenna to serve local industries.

Some of the original grading southeast of Lorain (never used) can be found with diligent searching. The actual right-of-way in Cleveland can be seen south of the I-480 freeway bridge over the Cuyahoga valley, as it is marked by utility lines and a maintenance road high on the east slope of the Cuyahoga River. The piers for the Tinkers Creek trestle can be seen in the Tinkers Creek Metropark. The three high trestles and the bridge over the Pennsy at Ravenna have been removed.

Much of the southeastern end has been converted to a bike-and-hike trail, preserving the actual route through Northfield, Hudson and Stow. For about five miles the trail borders the eastern edge of the Cuyahoga Valley National Park, and the bridge over the Ohio Turnpike remains to accommodate the bike trail, after being rebuilt several years ago when the Turnpike was expanded to three lanes each way. Thus, it is easy to trace most of the route of the Lake Erie and Pittsburg, even though it has been gone for thirty-six years.



State Route 91 crosses over the Bike Trail on the former roadbed of the Lake Erie and Pittsburg in northern Stow. Photo by Gene Stebbins.



Rebuilt Bridge for Bike Trail over the Ohio Turnpike. Photo by Gene Stebbins



Bike trail crosses over Barlow Road in Hudson. New bridge built on the old railroad abutments. Photo by Gene Stebbins



**THE PENNSYLVANIA RAILROAD**  
**TECHNICAL AND HISTORICAL SOCIETY**  
 A PENNSYLVANIA NON-PROFIT CORPORATION

REPLY TO:

**LINES WEST - BUCKEYE REGION CHAPTER**  
**326 BEAR WOODS DRIVE**  
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**OFFICE OF THE TREASURER GG BILDERBACK III**  
 Email: [ggb3@columbus.rr.com](mailto:ggb3@columbus.rr.com) Phone: (614) 718-1656

**2007 MEMBERSHIP DUES RECEIPT**  
**PLEASE CIRCLE TYPE OF MEMBERSHIP APPLYING FOR:**

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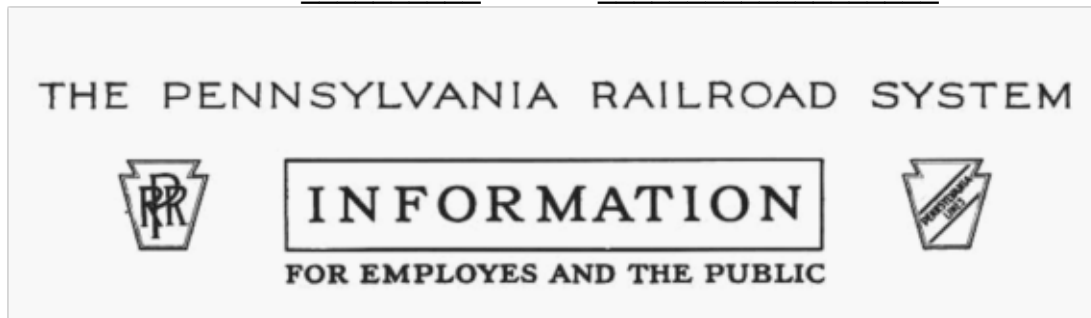
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FOR YOUR SUPPORT**