

Lines West – Buckeye Region Newsletter



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**In this Issue: Chapter Meeting in Upper
Arlington**

Chapter Meeting in Columbus, February 17

Our next chapter meeting will be held SUNDAY, February 17 at 1 o'clock in Meeting Room B in the Upper Arlington Main Library, 2800 Tremont Road, Upper Arlington. Take Lane Avenue west to Tremont, and turn right (north) on Tremont to the Main Library. Please note this is the main library, and not the branch where we previously met. You can download a map of their location at the library website www.ualibrary.org.

We will have a slide show by Dick Jacobs, and a presentation and display by Dick Briggs about his Lines West structure kits. The freight station is a 16 x 32 foot building being produced in O scale, HO scale and N scale kits. Early reports are of a quality kit.

We would like to have a good display of models and artifacts for this meeting. We know many of you like to share your efforts to inspire the rest of the members. Models under construction are welcome as well as finished models, and this is not a competition—no judging or nitpicking will be permitted! If you have questions about modeling, bring them, and we'll try to get some answers from the combined wisdom of the group.

At this meeting will be the annual election of officers and a good time to renew your memberships for the coming year. If you have not already done so.

The following article is used by permission of the Holmes County Rails to Trails Coalition. Further information can be found on their website at www.holmestrail.org

The Rails Before the Trail in Holmes County

HISTORY

The railroad which became the Holmes County Trail started life as a branch of one of Ohio's earliest railroads, the Cleveland and Pittsburgh, to link Akron and the surrounding territory with the railroad's main line at Hudson, Ohio. Construction reached Akron in 1852 and was extended 48 miles through Orrville to Millersburg in 1854. By 1873, the line, which had been renamed the Cleveland, Mount Vernon and Delaware Railroad, was completed to Columbus.

In 1885, as the line entered its golden era, it was renamed the Cleveland Akron and Columbus Railway (CA&C)- a name still often used today. During this period it came under the control of the Pennsylvania Railroad (PRR) one of America's greatest railroad systems. While the line came to be known officially as the PRR's Akron Division, many employees referred to it as the "Hook and Eye" Division because of its large employment of Mennonites who used this type of closure on their clothing. In 1968, the line was taken over by the Penn Central Corporation as a result of the merger of the Pennsylvania Railroad and the New York Central systems. The property became part of the Consolidated Rail Corporation (CONRAIL) through another merger in 1976, although the rail route had already been partially abandoned. Full abandonment and scrapping of the entire line occurred in the early 1980's.

A BUSY ROUTE

For much of its life, the CA&C line carried both local and through traffic between the Cleveland area and the Pennsylvania Railroad's main east-west lines at Orrville and Columbus. Freight traffic included coal, farm products, livestock and lumber. CA&C passenger trains regularly featured dining, sleeping and parlor cars. These trains also had railway post office cars which carried mail and distributed it along the route. The line was a major route for troop trains carrying soldiers to southern camps during World Wars I and II. After the war, through passenger service declined quickly and ended entirely in December, 1950.

One of the line's most dramatic moments occurred during the floods of 1913, one of the most devastating natural disasters ever experienced in this part of Ohio. After severe rains, on March 25, 1913, traffic was stopped by water over the tracks at many points. From Akron to Mount Vernon, the damage was particularly heavy. Between Holmesville and Killbuck ten miles of track were submerged. The bridge over the Kokosing River south of Gambier was destroyed and many embankments adjacent to bridges were washed away. It was not until April 4th that damage could be sufficiently repaired to permit through traffic between Hudson and Columbus.

ABANDONMENT AND REBIRTH

Ironically, the events which were to lead to the CA&C's abandonment as a rail line and its rebirth as a recreational trail began in Holmes and Wayne Counties though a similar flood over the July 4th holiday in 1969. Massive rains and flooding led to the loss of 22 lives and over \$20 million in damage. The CA&C was washed out at many places, especially north of Holmesville and the bankrupt Penn Central railroad chose not to rebuild. By that time the railroad was a shadow of its former self and freight traffic had diminished greatly. Although portions of the line would continue to serve local industries until the late 1970's, it never operated as a through route after 1969.

Fortunately a few far-sighted citizens saw the potential of the abandoned rail line as a recreational trail possessing great scenic beauty. Efforts in Knox County led to the establishment of the 14-mile Kokosing Gap trail over the former rail line between Danville and Mount Vernon in the early 1990's. Similar efforts in Holmes County have reopened this historic and scenic rail route to a new generation. Bikers, walkers, joggers and horses and buggies can now enjoy the scenery where express trains once rolled.

THE CA&C LINE IN HOLMES COUNTY

The CA&C entered Holmes County near Fredericksburg where there was a beautiful passenger station

in a park-like setting. Four miles further, the line reached Holmesville. Between Holmesville and Millersburg, the route paralleled a branch of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad which operated from Wooster to Millersburg between 1895 and 1928. The CA&C station at Millersburg survives and was relocated recently to serve as a trail head facility for the Holmes County Trail. Over the years, the rail line served a number of Millersburg industries including Standard Oil, Frank Brothers, Sinclair Refining, United Farmers Exchange, the A.S. Wengerd Slate Co., the Holmes County Farm Bureau and the Goodyear Corporation.

South from Millersburg, the line crossed marshes and wetlands until it reached the village of Killbuck where it crossed Killbuck Creek. At Killbuck, where the CA&C station still stands, the line was joined by the PRR's Dresden Branch which ran south to Warsaw Junction and Trinway where it joined the rasilroad's Pittsburgh-St. Louis line main line. After Killbuck, the line climbed to Glenmont (Pictoria) where a special block station controlled movements over one of Ohio's steepest railroad grades-Badow Pass. A special siding was built here to accommodate helper engines which assisted trains on the steep grades. Trains over the pass were required to use special braking procedures to prevent runaways. Near Brinkhaven, the line entered Knox County and crossed the Mohican River on a 300 foot-long bridge which has been restored recently for foot, bike and buggy traffic. Until the 1930's the valley at Brinkhaven and the CA&C line were crossed by another PRR ranch line-the Walhonding Valley (or "Wally") on a spectacular 700-foot long trestle that was over 70 feet high. Near here there is also a connection with the 14 mile-long Kokosing Gap Trail which follows the CA&C line to Mount Vernon.

Ed McHugh
Massillon Ohio
May 2005

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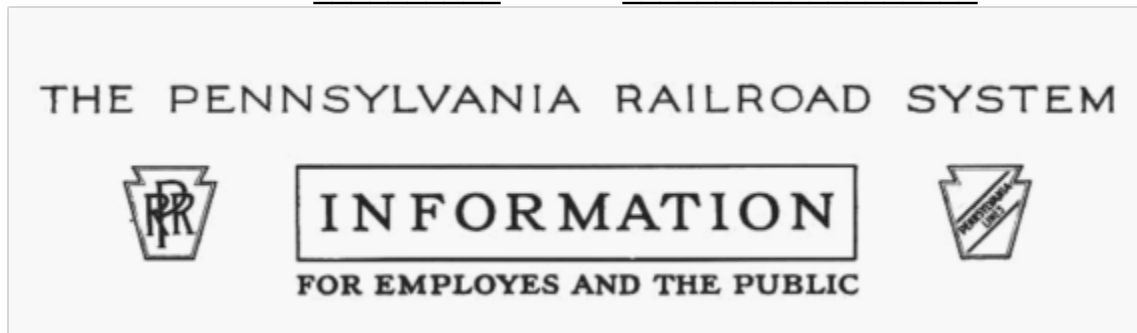
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FOR YOUR SUPPORT**
