

Roots of the New York Central Railroad in Columbus, Ohio

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THE CLEVELAND COLUMBUS & CINCINNATI RAILROAD (1851)

Among the charters re-activated by the state in the late 1840's was the one which had been granted in 1836 to the Cleveland Columbus & Cincinnati Railroad. This company then started construction of a railroad from Cleveland thru Galion and Delaware to Columbus. The road entered Columbus from the north, running east of and parallel to Fourth Street, then swinging southwestward to enter the passenger depot of the road from Xenia.

Regular traffic over this second road to enter Columbus was opened in April, 1851, more than a year after the Xenia road operated its first train. However, a grand excursion train passed over the road from Columbus to Cleveland on February 21, 1851, carrying members of the state legislature, city authorities of Columbus, and many other citizens, returning them to Columbus after a day's visit in Cleveland.

Although Cincinnati was included in the company name, the road was built originally between Cleveland and Columbus. The first actual move toward Cincinnati came in 1862. The Springfield Mt. Vernon & Pittsburgh Railroad had been nearly completed from Springfield thru Marysville to Delaware when the company became insolvent, and in the litigation which followed, the property was conveyed to the Cleveland Columbus & Cincinnati Railroad. In 1868, the Cleveland Columbus & Cincinnati Railroad consolidated with the Bellefontaine Railroad and the name of the consolidated properties became the Cleveland Columbus Cincinnati & Indianapolis Railroad. The consolidation gave the company a railroad consisting of lines between Cleveland and Columbus, Galion and Indianapolis, and Delaware and Springfield. Under various agreements made in 1872, the new company operated the Cincinnati & Springfield Railroad between Cincinnati and Dayton, and the Cincinnati Sandusky & Cleveland Railroad between Dayton and Springfield, thus providing control of thru trackage between Cleveland and Cincinnati.

In 1889, the Cleveland Columbus Cincinnati & Indianapolis Railroad was consolidated with lines in Indiana and Illinois, and the merged properties became known as the Cleveland Cincinnati Chicago & St. Louis

Railroad. Thus, with four large cities forming the company name and also comprising its principal terminals, the line was nicknamed the Big Four; the name caught popular fancy and the railroad officially adopted the name as the Big Four Route.

In recent years, control of the lines was acquired by the New York Central Railroad, which now operates the Big Four properties.

The Big Four story is continued in later paragraphs under the caption of the Columbus & Springfield Railroad.

THE COLUMBUS & SPRINGFIELD RAILROAD (1873)

This company was chartered in 1849 to build a railroad between Springfield and Columbus. The company completed a railroad in 1853 for a distance of twenty miles from Springfield to London, but lack of capital forced temporary postponement of construction into Columbus.

The road was leased in 1854 to the Mad River and Lake Erie Railroad. The latter company passed thru several financial embarrassments and name changes. In 1872, its operation was taken over by the Cleveland Columbus Cincinnati & Indianapolis Railroad, and in 1873 the road was completed between London and Columbus. This link provided the latter company with a thru route between Columbus and Cincinnati. At the same time, the company's line from Springfield thru Marysville to Delaware became a secondary route.

The old Columbus & Springfield line entered Columbus thru Lilley Chapel and Georgesville, crossing West Broad Street at the far edge of Westgate, extending eastward in the area north of Broad Street, and after crossing the Scioto and Olentangy Rivers it paralleled Spruce Street and extended to the Union depot area where it connected with the parent Columbus-Cleveland road, at one time the so called Bee Line, later the Big Four Route, and now the New York Central.

The line has one name train operating thru Columbus- the Ohio State Limited, which operates between Cincinnati, Cleveland, and New York City.

THE COLUMBUS SHAWNEE & HOCKING RAILROAD (1880)

In 1880, another railroad entered Columbus, from a crossroads named Bush's Station (now Thurston) in the northern part of Fairfield County. This road had various names but it was best known among old railroaders by the 'CS&H', and for clarity we will refer to it hereafter in our story as the CS&H. It had quite a long and interesting corporate and operating history before and after its construction, but it seems to have settled quietly under the

diadem of the New York Central, despite the fact that its Columbus single track now ends in a field of weeds at Woodland Avenue in the northeastern part of the city. From that point eastward and southeastward, it serves as an industrial track for some five miles to a point called Truro, adjacent to the Farm Bureau elevators near Brice.

It all began with the incorporation in 1869 of the Atlantic & Lake Erie Railroad Company which was formed to build a railroad from a point near Pomeroy on the Ohio River to Toledo on Lake Erie, passing thru Granville, twenty-five miles east of Columbus. Between foreclosures, receiverships, and reorganizations, this company and its successors managed to complete stretches of grading here and there between the river and the lake, and even laid some rails, so that by 1875 it was operating coal trains from Moxahala in the Sunday Creek coal fields to its junction with the Central Ohio Railroad (B&O and PRR) four miles west of Newark. Even for this short haul, trackage rights over the Cincinnati & Muskingum valley Railroad were secured for the twelve miles between New Lexington and Bremen.

In the next three years, additional construction was completed by sections along the originally projected route, when the company decided to build a branch line to Columbus. The purpose, of course, was to afford transportation of Sunday Creek coal to the fast growing capital city and to make connections at Columbus with the other railroads which diverged in various directions.

As previously mentioned, the corporate organization underwent several changes - from the Atlantic & Lake Erie to the Ohio Central, to the Columbus and Sunday Creek Valley, and back again to the Ohio Central, under which name the road entered Columbus. But the prospects for success looked so good that each reorganization found additional capital for continued construction. In 1882, the line was completed from the river to the lake, but for two years previously trains had been operating over the road from Thurston to Columbus. In other works, the CS&H entered Columbus in 1880, although not under that identification,

The CS&H entered Columbus from the southeast thru the towns of Baltimore and Basil, Pickerington and Brice, crossing the national road on the western edge of the present village of Whitehall, passing over land now occupied by the Army Reserve Depot, crossing the B&O and PRR joint tracks under the present James Road viaduct, running northwestward across Fifth Avenue in the neighborhood of the Ralston plant, crossing Nelson Road just north of Fifth Avenue, and meandering westward into Columbus, between Fifth Avenue and the state fair grounds, quite open country then, until it met the Big Four line from Cleveland. Then it swung southward along the east side of the Big Four and paralleled the latter line into the union depot. The

CS&H freight terminal yard was adjacent to and north of the Norfolk & Western terminal yard.

Financial troubles continued to plague the Ohio Central Railroad, and in a reorganization the road from Columbus to Thurston and a recently constructed road from Thurston to Zanesville and Shawnee, became the Columbus Shawnee & Hocking Railroad, whence the familiar initials CS&H'. In the official Railway Guide of 1893, the CS&H was described as the popular line between Columbus and Zanesville, with elegant new equipment, finest trains in Ohio, and no change of cars as via other routes. In addition to the union depot, the local stations listed were Fifth Avenue, State Fair Grounds, CA&C Crossing, Shepard, Alum Creek Junction, and Doney's (National Road). The mileage to Zanesville was 67, and the running time 150 minutes.

In 1893, two additional railroads entered Columbus, both of which later became allied in an operating way with the CS&H. They were the Sandusky & Columbus Short Line. and the Toledo & Ohio Central. Although separate corporations, the Short Line and the CS&H had an interlocking management; after some time the two roads became known as the Columbus Sandusky & Hocking Line, with obviously no change in initials for the CS&H. The Toledo and Ohio Central entered the west side of Columbus in 1893, and two years later it completed trackage to Truro, making a connection with the CS&H, with trackage rights to Thurston. That was the beginning of the end for the CS&H. The Toledo & Ohio Central, the principal antecedent of which had been the Ohio Central re-acquired control of the CS&H and that part of the CS&H northwestward from Truro became a secondary line.

The New York Central eventually acquired the Toledo & Ohio Central and the CS&H became an industrial track only, for the convenience of industries which had located along its tracks. More recently, the New York Central abandoned and removed the tracks west of Woodland Avenue: from that avenue eastward to Leonard Avenue, the old main line of the CS&H was a single track of rusted rails on rotted ties, hidden by high weeds.

TOLEDO & OHIO CENTRAL RAILROAD (1893)

This line was completed and opened to traffic from Toledo thru Bowling Green, Findlay, Kenton, and Marysville, to Columbus, in 1893. One of the corporate antecedents of the Toledo & Ohio Central was the Atlantic & Lake Erie Railroad which was mentioned in our story of the CS&H. Continuing from that point, the Toledo & Ohio Central was incorporated in 1885 as a re-organization of the Ohio Central Railroad, which, with connections, was operating the line from Charleston, West Virginia, to Toledo thru Granville,

east of Columbus. Grades were steep, curves were sharp, and no large cities were included on the Granville route. The company wanted a river to lake route thru the Columbus gateway, and finally got it.

By foreclosure proceedings 1892, the Toledo & Ohio Central acquired a railroad which had been built in 1883 between Toledo and Findlay, also an extension of the same line between Findlay and Kenton which had been completed in 1892 shortly before its sale to the Toledo & Ohio Central. The latter road then seized its opportunity to open its desired route from Toledo thru Columbus to Thurston.

The route from Kenton thru Marysville to Columbus had been surveyed and right-of-way had been acquired by other railroad interests several years previously, and these titles were acquired by the Toledo & Ohio Central which promptly constructed a railroad to fill the gap between Kenton and Columbus. The new line was completed in 1893 to the McKinley Avenue area of the west side where connections were made with the Big Four, the Little Miami, and the Baltimore & Ohio.

Two years later, in 1895, the line was extended to Truro where it connected with the CS&H with trackage rights to Thurston thus forming a second continuous line between Toledo and Thurston. Later, the Toledo & Ohio Central re-acquired control of the CS&H properties.

In 1900, the company acquired the unfinished road of the Columbus Northwestern Railway which extended westward from the Toledo & Ohio Central line at Peoria in Union County, and completed and operated the line to Bellefontaine and St. Marys.

The Toledo & Ohio Central entered Columbus in the area west of Marble Cliff on the west side of the Scioto River, and established its terminal yard along McKinley Avenue between Glenwood and Grandview Avenues. From that point it extended eastward to its crossing of the Hocking Valley line, then swung southward and paralleled the latter road to the present South High Street viaduct. Thence it extended eastward in the area of Marion Road and Refugee Pike and connected with the CS&H at Truro, as mentioned previously.

In addition to its two lines between Toledo and Thurston and its branch to St. Marys, the Toledo & Ohio Central operated from Thurston to Corning in Perry County, from which town a continuation of the same line, under the name of the Kanawha & Michigan Railroad, was operated to Charleston and Gauley Bridge, West Virginia. The old CS&H properties east of Thurston became the Zanesville & Western Railroad. The properties of these three companies were leased to the New York Central in 1922, and merged into the New York Central in 1938.

The Toledo & Ohio Central was the only Columbus railroad which did not operate its passenger trains into the union depot. Instead, it built its passenger depot where its line crossed West Broad Street. Hocking Valley trains also used the Broad Street station, although the Hocking valley continued to use the union depot also. The Broad Street station was discontinued after the New York Central assumed operation of the Toledo & Ohio Central properties.

* Text taken from *Columbus Railroads* by Rowlee Steiner, 1952, an unpublished manuscript.