

## Section Five Commentary, Mileposts Columbus to Sandusky

The last PRR line to enter Columbus, the Columbus & Sandusky Short Line (SSL), was built in 1893, apparently one of the boom years in rail construction. Leading to Lake Erie at Sandusky, it quickly developed a seasonal coal traffic northbound, but unlike most mineral roads, had little iron ore traffic southbound. At first, it operated in concert with coal-originating Columbus Shawnee & Hocking; in fact the public timetables were issued together as the "Columbus Sandusky & Hocking". But circa 1902, when it was acquired by Pennsy interests, the SSL became the outlet to the lake for N&W coal.

The SSL was once the "Sandusky Division", but by 1923 was part of the Toledo Division.

Milepost history, taken from public and employee timetables, throws us some curves. An 1899 public timetable (copied from the October 1899 *Rand McNally Official Railroad Guide*) has zero miles at the Sandusky (station) end, whereas the June 2, 1901 CS&H public timetable shows mileages (no tenths) going both ways. However, the CS&H Employee Timetable (#15, Sept 29, 1901) shows the railroad's mileposts starting at Columbus. PRR's 1923 CT1000 (newly including the sidings, stations, and towers of Lines West divisions after system consolidation) puts its zero in Sandusky where the line connects to the B&O (this is 0.6 mile east of the Big Four station used by the SSL), but Toledo Division's ETT #5, June 10, 1923, puts the zero post at Columbus. Then CUD remains MP 0.0 until at least 1936, but 1942 and 1945 ETT's put 0.0 at Big Four's Sandusky station, and then (with passenger service long gone) 1947 and 1950 ETT's moved the zero out to Bayside tower. By 1954 mileposts once again count from the south end, but the station lists in 1954, 1956, and 1964 omit the zero milepost and simply show numbering from FIELDS (MP 2.1 in Grogan Yard) north.

Sold to the Norfolk & Western, the Sandusky line station list disappears from PRR ETT's after 1964, moving to N&W ETT's for the years following. It's striking that in Norfolk Southern's 1999 timetable, after the line has gone through heavy modernization and upgrading, most of the points are still listed at the same mileposts. FIELDS is still MP 2.1, and the list goes up to MP 109.3 (short of Bay Junction and NYC's Lake Shore and Michigan Southern main). 109.3 is labeled "Sandusky" but is probably where the SSL meets the Nickel Plate.

Most mileposts in the middle of the railroad were very stable (after normalization, see "recast" numbers). But both ends of the line show the results of expansion of yards and facilities every few years, with 1916 and 1927-30 campaigns being the biggest.

At the Columbus end, SSL trains followed three different routes out of Columbus Union Depot as Grogan Yard grew. The 1901, 1923, and 1926 ETT's show the line's "zero point" as CUD, measured up Big Four trackage rights and around the EAST side of the State Fairgrounds. Post-1930, the main routed through Grogan Yard (east to west) and then up the WEST side of the State Fairgrounds, but with the lowest mileposts redesignated. The countdown from about milepost 4 put MP 2.1 at FIELDS in Grogan Yard, and the 0.0 falls somewhere along the "joint track" on the north side of Yard B.

I've mentioned the line relocation at Delaware; its distance reduction was not reflected in mileposts on either end of the project.

The north end of the railroad again reflected changes over the years. Bayside "tower" kept moving south as the yard at Sandusky got longer and longer. The line's "north end" was cut back from its B&O connection in the town of Sandusky to the Big Four station that PRR passenger stations used (until 1931), and finally N&W or NS quit recognizing the main line north of the former Nickel Plate's Buffalo-to-Chicago main.

Three tables will illustrate this data:

- 1. MP SSL Columbus to Sandusky inputs** - shows the raw numbers as they appear in their sources.
- 2. MP SSL Columbus-Sandusky (late ETTs) with normalized mileposts** - shows stability of PRR mileposts since 1936. 1936 to 1950 numbers are recast ("normalized") for comparison with mileposts beginning in Columbus. 1956 Columbus Div ETT only shows Columbus-end numbers.
- 3. MP SSL Columbus-Sandusky (early ETTs), with normalized mileposts** - the 1899 passenger timetable, 1923 CT1000 distances, and ETT's 1930 and 1936 are recast for comparison with mileposts beginning in Columbus.