

Toledo & Ohio Central - Road Trains South from Columbus – the 1960s

by James M. Cavanaugh

Daily southbound freight trains from West Columbus Yard in the 1960s were CN-2 and usually a second train called variously CD-8 or some similar freight symbol, bound for Hobson Yard near Middleport on the Ohio River. There were also three weekly Corning Extras, which delivered Peabody Coal unit trains of empty yellow-liveried hoppers to Claybank and brought the loads north. Occasionally there were empty drags for the several other on-line coalmines or for Hobson. The NYC also scheduled Corning and Thurston Turns to drop off cars or mine-run light GP9 engines, pick up an inbound cut and return all within one 16-hour crew working shift.

T&OC train symbols had ancient historical significance. “CN” stood for “Columbus-Norfolk” although the latter city was perhaps 300 miles beyond the southern terminus of the T&OC at Swiss, West Virginia, via the Nicholas, Fayette & Greenbrier Railroad and the C&O through Clifton Forge, Virginia. “CD” stood for “Columbus-Dickinson,” the latter being the NYC’s major yard in West Virginia, south of Charleston.

The south-end freight trains tapped the traffic-rich petrochemical plants and mines of the Kanawha Valley above and below Charleston, West Virginia, including the T&OC’s orphan Hitop Branch reached via the B&O. The T&OC hauled about 125-175 cars per day north from this area, much of it at very attractive freight rates. The T&OC had somewhat of a rail monopoly between this area and the big manufacturing cities of the upper Midwest, especially Detroit. Rates on these industrial compounds might be many multiples per ton more than for commodities like coal or crushed stone. Tonnage was always heavier northbound, making it a challenge to balance up engines and empty cars efficiently, but southbound loads also included good-paying freight like new automobiles on long three-tier racks and reagent chemicals in tank cars. Although the T&OC had no active shipper for over 100 miles between Glouster, Ohio and the Charleston area, such lucrative year-round overhead traffic nevertheless kept this NYC line in the black when many others faltered and were abandoned.

Crews for trains south from Columbus were dispatched from a big board at the West Columbus yard office. While the north and south ends of the T&OC from Columbus had separate sets of preferred “hotshot” crews and pool crews, train crew vacancies for both were filled from a single “extra board.” Younger brakemen like me had our names on wooden blocks in a column of holes on this board, and would wait to reach the top to be “first out” for the next crew opening. Under ancient work rules, West Virginia-based Kanawha & Michigan or “K&M” crews also handled some trains north from Hobson to West Columbus or to Corning and back.

Power for T&OC southbound freight trains in the late 1960s was usually three 1,500-hp EMD F7A covered wagon A units (carbody cab diesels), sometimes with a cabless B unit in the middle or rear. Our big coal trains, with 100 empties south and 10,000 tons north, rated three big six-axle EMD GP40 3,600-hp hood units. Good power was essential on the T&OC south of Columbus, with its “up and down” profile. While NYC engines were not much to look at, the roundhouse men took great pride and diligently kept them in very good running order.

All T&OC trains were unscheduled “extra” trains with no timetable-fixed departure times. Our five-man crews (engineer, fireman and head brakeman rode the locomotive, and flagman and conductor rode the caboose) were called two hours in advance of when the train was expected to be ready. Southbound freights seldom had switching to do, or at most one quick set off at Bremen. So it was a relaxing ride, especially warm and dry on an ugly winter day when you would prefer not to get out on the ground to throw switches and uncouple cars.

The T&OC Western Branch to Corning, and the T&OC Southern Branch beyond, were manual block territory with trains dispatched by handwritten or typed orders, controlled by manual signals. The latter were green, yellow and red lights mounted atop tall steel poles beside the track, activated by a nearby block-station operator. A typical train order on NYC green onionskin paper, carbon copy to each of the engine and caboose, might read: “CN-2 south engine 1746 (one seven four six) run extra Thurston to New Lexington, meet NT-5 north engine 6096 (six zero nine six) at Junction City.” That meant your train was cleared through to the next block station, obeying interlocking signals at rail crossings, prepared to stop at any point within any yard limits, running at timetable track speed outside yard limits except for occasional “slow-order” spots, taking siding at the assigned place to meet the named northbound.

On the Western Branch, the Timetable rule of the road said the southbound train took siding unless the train order expressly indicated otherwise. If you took siding, the head brakeman (on the locomotive) would throw the switch going in and the flagman (on the caboose) would align it back to the main once the train was in. After the opposing train had passed, we would call the Columbus Dispatcher from a trackside telephone box found at each end of the siding and report “No. 6096 clear south end Thurston, with markers.” That latter statement indicated the engine and caboose were displaying red lights (in the old days flags) meaning that was the end of that train. If the engine showed green markers, that indicated a second section of that train was following, and there might even be a third section. If you had orders to take siding and meet that train, you had to stay in the siding until all its sections passed. During steam days, trains were rarely over 55-60 cars long, but once sure-footed diesels hauled all trains (1955 onward on the T&OC) trains could be longer and virtually never had second sections.

Track speed on the T&OC Western between Columbus and Corning was mostly 50 miles per hour. South of Corning on the T&OC Southern Branch, the limit was 25-35 MPH. Most trains did not sustain 30 MPH on this constantly curving track with a number of challenging grades.

Departing West Columbus, southbounds crept past the B&O crossing at GN Tower, across the double-track diamonds of the C&O and PRR Miami Side at Scioto (LM Tower), then sped up to about 20-25 miles per hour onto 5.5 miles of double track main that began at the LM interlocking, the only double-track on the T&OC. The trains accelerated over West Broad Street on a bridge past the old Chinese pagoda-style T&OC passenger station, across the Scioto River on a truss bridge side-by-side with the C&O, past NYC’s Frankfort Street Tower and its crossover interchange with the C&O. South of Frankfort Street the T&OC main curved 90 degrees to the east and parted company with the C&O. The T&OC ran due east under High Street and Parsons Avenue, past Steelton Cabin, the South Columbus yard and South Columbus Industrial Track lead, along Refugee Road and across the N&W diamond at Bannon Tower. The N&W-manned Bannon was an interlocking protecting the N&W crossing but not a train order point for the

Western Branch. T&OC southbound freight trains highballed past South Columbus and Bannon unless there was a stop for a conflicting N&W move.

The first 30 miles past Bannon, Truro and Thurston were reminiscent of the north end of the Western Branch to Toledo, running through flat open country, rolling at track speed limit past farms and towns like Brice, Basil, Baltimore and Pickerington with few active shippers. Our trains would roar through at 50 miles per hour, the engineer pulling the overhead cord for the air horn, blasting out its distinctive grade crossing pattern of long-long-short-long.

Thurston, the Eastern Branch and Z&W

Thurston (Western MP 160.8) was a manual block train order station manned by the T&OC with a sturdy red brick tower and interlocking. Here was the west end of the Zanesville & Western track to Fultonham (and originally Zanesville) and the southern terminus of the T&OC Eastern Branch to Toledo. In 1968-9 the old Eastern from Thurston (Eastern MP 147) to Berwick (Eastern MP 46) was renamed the Thurston Running Track, with the “new” Eastern being reconfigured from the original Eastern south from Stanley Yard to Berwick (Eastern MP 46) and then 31 miles west to Kenton over the NYC’s former Big Four Sandusky branch.

First called Bush Station and later Hadley Junction, Thurston was originally a crossing of the Zanesville-Columbus Z&W and the north-south T&OC, before all became NYC assets. By the 1960s Thurston’s layout had been revised to have the Western Branch bypass the Z&W-Eastern junction and diamond via a sweeping curve to the south joining the original T&OC right-of-way at the tower, with a 148-car passing track to the west of the main south of the tower, and a 125-car siding east of the main. This must have been a busy junction in its heyday, with a big passenger station and freight terminal, but it was decidedly forlorn by the 1960s. Thurston yard only had a couple active tracks remaining, “active” being at best a relative term.

The interconnections with the Eastern and Z&W clearly had originally been elegantly laid out to permit through movements in all directions at speed, but that was long in the past. The Eastern running north toward Buckeye Lake was overgrown with weeds. The Z&W looked like “abandonment bait” sprouting saplings between the ties. But Thurston Tower always hung out written orders in hoops for our big trains highballing through, its little-used interlocking plant levers still controlling the array of dormant switches and signals for the other fading lines.

A rare surviving historical arrangement at Thurston was an NYC victualing contract with occupants of a large old house close by the curving northwest quadrant track connecting the realigned Western main with the Eastern Branch. If a T&OC crew had put in long hours switching at Thurston, the Road Foreman (man in charge of engine crews and motive power on an NYC line) or Trainmaster (man in charge of train crews and freight operations on the line) might order up a meal at this location and give the crew 30 minutes off to eat it. I recall a pleasant aproned woman setting us a table in a big side room with white lace curtains.

Southeast of Thurston, the Central Ohio prairie gave way to the Appalachian foothills, with the T&OC track descending into a 95-mile snaking right-of-way onward to the Ohio River with barely a straight 500-yard stretch anywhere. South of Pleasantville the track curved through a steep-sided wooded valley past two ancient but active elevators at Rushville, south of the Ohio

Route 37 highway viaduct. Here the track was graded into the west bank of a beautiful fast-flowing stream in dark woods, emerging into a bright clearing just before approaching Bremen, near the east edge of Fairfield County. "Coming through the woods" we would say to the Bremen operator over the radio to let him know we would be there in about five minutes.

The Sheepshank

At Bremen (Western Milepost 173), the NYC track made a broad 290-degree curve to the east to merge onto the Pennsylvania Railroad's 1850s-vintage Zanesville Branch connecting Morrow with Trinway. NYC railroaders called this track the "Sheepshank" as the T&OC main entered and left it almost at right angles, like the three sections of a sheep's leg. It had only a few PRR locals each week in the 1960s, and T&OC trains dominated the traffic. By 1969 the Sheepshank was redesignated as part of the Western, with T&OC mileposts (stating distance to Toledo).

A look at the map suggested this old PRR line, after curving up through Zanesville and Dresden to the Trinway interchange with the PRR double-track Panhandle line, must have continued straight north into the Dresden Industrial Track of the old PRR Cleveland, Akron & Columbus (CA&C) line, up through Killbuck, Apple Creek and Orrville to Cleveland, and in fact that was the case. A tunnel on that line, built in the 1880s, became unstable and a portion between Trinway and the CA&C was abandoned in the late 1930s.

The speed limit on the Sheepshank was 40 MPH. T&OC southbounds picked up train orders at Bremen covering the block to New Lexington, 12 miles to the south (due east geographically). Southbound CN-2 would sometimes drop or pick up a covered hopper or tank car or two at Bremen, utilizing a curving siding on the north side of the tracks near the junction and operator's one-story brick "tower".

Proceeding south (east) from Bremen, the Sheepshank was virtually straight. Not far from Bremen and just across the Perry County line was Junction City. Here the Sheepshank crossed a seldom-used B&O branch that connected Newark and Thornville to the north with Shawnee to the south. Old maps indicate the south end of this B&O track connected with a T&OC track called the Buckingham Branch that emerged back onto the T&OC at Glouster (Southern MP 8), and with a long-abandoned Z&W branch that ran through Corning.

The B&O Junction City diamond was protected by a manually-activated double-ended semaphore atop a tall pole, with red lights at each end of the crossbar. The locomotive crew approaching would look for this bar, which although small seemed visible for a great distance. Whoever saw it first would call out "straight up and down" meaning the way was clear. Sometimes this area would have heavy ground-hugging fog, but the lights on this crossbar seemed to be just high enough to be visible above it.

There was a passing track at Junction City on the south side of the main just past the B&O diamond, sometimes but rarely used for NYC train meets in the late 1960s. You could get into it with either a T&OC or PRR switch key. Junction City also had inactive brick works off to the south. The oven doors on its rows of round domed kilns must have glowed like red eyes in the night, firing brick, tile and pyro-bar from the yellow Perry County clay, but they were cold and vine-covered by the 1960s.

Tunnels and Hills

At the west edge of New Lexington (Western MP-185), near the Perry County fairgrounds, the Western diverged from the Sheepshank, bearing off to the south past a triangular-shaped brick passenger platform at the former passenger station, clearly idle for years. New Lexington had a few active shippers, along the bottom of its industrial section valley, with the stately county court house and downtown buildings high up on a ridge to the east. New Lex always had train orders waiting for us in the familiar “Y” shaped hoop devices arrayed high and low on an iron stanchion on the platform edge.

South of New Lexington, on a stretch built in the late 1870s, the railroad got more and more interesting, running up a grade to the New Lexington Tunnel, a raw (unlined) 644-foot cut through the red Ohio sandstone, pieces of which frequently dislodged and fell on the track. In 1969 NYC maintenance contractors bolted wire mesh up to the roof of the tunnel, but this seemed only to encourage thin angular slabs of rock to calve away from the ceiling. Strangely, the New Lex airport runway crossed over the railroad on the flat ridge top above the tunnel.

Beyond the New Lex Tunnel was Claybank (Western Branch MP-189) and the huge Peabody mine and tippie. Claybank had a siding and several yard tracks for our Mine Run GP9s to pull the yellow hoppers 40 at a time slowly underneath the loading tower to fill with Michigan-bound steam coal. Unlike standard hoppers, which featured four sets of flap doors on the bottom to dump the load, the Peabodys were just big welded steel buckets meant to be picked up and dumped over sideways by gigantic unloading devices at their power plant destination.

The Claybank area lived up to its odd name, being a shocking eyesore of steeply-eroded yellow and orange clay embankments along rust-red muddy creeks, the legacy of unremediated strip mining in years before the Ohio Assembly passed restoration legislation.

Past Claybank, the track paralleled Ohio Route 13, sweeping through a 310-degree curve around a small hill topped by the tiny brick Moxahala Church surrounded by a few ancient cedars. Someone always pointed out that this was the only place in the world where all four sides of a church were visible from the same road and railroad. Did anyone care about this unique and exotically-named place? We did not find anything in Guinness Book of Records, or any official Ohio Tourism pamphlet.

Next came the brick-lined Moxahala Tunnel (MP-193), longest on the T&OC at 1,275 feet. This sat atop a short hill with a 1.2 percent grade, not difficult for a well-powered southbound freight. But with its two-mile long 1.1 percent approach grade on the south it was a fair challenge for any heavy train running up from Corning on a wet night. Unusual for a rail tunnel, Moxie was not straight, having slight curves at either end with an 800-foot tangent track in the middle. The cuts approaching the tunnel were vertical-sided sandstone chasms, again with falling rocks. But these softball-sized nuggets apparently served a useful purpose. In steam days if a train slipped and lost momentum, even with sand on, the fireman and brakeman would sometimes climb out and pick up these rocks and pound them on the rails at the critical point to put down grit for extra traction on their next try at summiting this hill.

NYC locomotives earned their pay on these grades. Our older covered wagon F7As still had good muscle tone. Under full throttle, they would rattle and strain, the big 16-piston diesel

shaking the weight-bearing carbody exterior frame with a deafening “yatega-yatega-yatega” roar. In a covered wagon, you were sitting inside the box with the engine. The bigger new GP40s, with their power plant mounted behind the cab on girder frames below with only a sheet metal “hood” covering, purred with a confidence-inspiring “zhhhhhrrrrr”, their muffled combustion sounds combining with the whine of turbochargers.

If you could not make it up Moxie Hill, you would invest a couple hours “doubling” it, waiting for the conductor to come forward, taking half your train over to New Lexington, coming back for the rest, and then coupling back up to continue to Columbus. Many a northbound coal run lay down brutally here with a broken coupler knuckle or pulled drawbar.

Corning and the Sunday Creek Coalfields

Past Moxie Tunnel, it was downhill through the old mining town of Rendville (Western MP-195), where in days long past a branch of the Z&W (known down here as the “Zig-Zag & Wobble”) ran northeast up toward Zanesville. Its embankment was barely visible, marked by a lichen-covered wooden crossbuck sticking up in the weeds where a road crossing existed years before. That ancient line ran parallel to the T&OC south into Corning, crossing the T&OC on the north edge of town and then turning sharply west up through a tunnel to Congo, Drakes and over a portion of the T&OC Buckingham Branch to Shawnee. The Z&W connected the rich Sunday Creek coalfields of Perry and Athens Counties directly with Cleveland via Trinway and the CA&C Dresden track to Orrville, as mentioned above, in the late 1880s.

Rendville evoked dark images of an old “mining company town” - a small row of narrow wood siding houses, paint blackened by the sulfur dioxide you could smell in the air from smoldering mine slagheaps nearby. All residents appeared to be elderly African-Americans.

Further down the hill the track rolled past the small but active J. Cook coalmine into Corning, the south end of the Western Branch at milepost 197. Here was mile zero of the Southern Branch, which extended 56 miles on to Hobson and 172 miles to its end at Swiss, West Virginia. This was originally the Kanawha & Michigan Railroad built in the 1880s, initially controlled by the Hocking Valley Railroad. The C&O later acquired the Hocking Valley. Under antitrust laws, federal courts ordered the K&M to be sold to the T&OC in 1914. Corning was the fulcrum of NYC on-line coal operations up through World War II, with a big yard, the former K&M steam roundhouse dating from 1890, car facilities, a water plant and tanks and a sprawling gray wooden freight house that contained the operator’s bay-windowed office. This well-kept building also contained five little crew bedrooms and a shower room for Corning Extra crews going off duty overnight. The cool tap water in here tasted incredibly good, but was so “mineral hard” you could shave without soap! It had been a major chore to precipitate the minerals out so the water here could be used in locomotives.

Corning was one of the great original railroad towns of Ohio from the 1870s to the 1950s. The Sunday Creek mines constituted the world’s biggest producing coalfields in the 1880s. There were then many dozens of big tipples and shafts along the T&OC right-of-way in the 20-mile Sunday Creek valley between Rendville and Chauncey. Except for a few priests, ministers and undertakers, virtually everyone was a miner or railroader. Corning had up to ten passenger trains a day on the T&OC, K&M and the Z&W, plus a daily work train that ferried miners to their

shafts, dropped off empty hoppers and collected the loads. From 1880 – 1930, Corning alone was good for up to 100 loaded coal hoppers per day.

Many crewmen on the Western were born and raised in Corning, so most had friends and relatives there and would socialize. There was low-sided wooden grillroom alongside Sunday Creek just across the bridge, which believably boasted its spring-water chilled beer was the coldest in Ohio. There was another restaurant up West Main Street that episodically offered groundhog sandwiches (interesting, not highly recommended).

Just across the Main Street bridge over the muddy blood-red Sunday Creek sat the town basketball court, a rough asphalt rectangle with a plywood backboard and bent netless rim at one end, illuminated at night by a single 100-watt bulb on a pole at the opposite end. We would play for hours in the sweltering summer night air, arguing whether someone's shot went in because it was impossible to tell in that dim light with no net. Early Mass was available at St. Bernard's, an 85-year old brick church along the creek up Adams Street, anchored for years by the jovial Father Haluska. Though small, St. B's featured a sizable pipe organ with a very rare pneumatic keyboard mechanism. The sound emerged about one full second after the key was depressed, making it a challenge to play in time with the choir.

South of town was the 125-car Corning siding, which ran past the former long yards and roundhouse site beneath "slave" cables that worked oil well pumps uphill to the east. The T&OC then rolled past Burr Oak Lake (and a good restaurant along Route 13 – open late, that paramount concern of railroaders) and into Glouster (Southern MP-8). There to the east about MP 7, at a place formerly called Palos, was the long-gone interconnection with the Federal Valley Railroad, which ran 15 miles to Lathrop and interchanged with the MC&C, another long-defunct short line to Marietta. A T&OC engineer, Gene Galloway, had worked on the FVRR in steam days, and told us all about it. To the west about MP 8 was the T&OC Buckingham Branch where we sometimes picked up loaded coal hoppers. Beyond Glouster sat Trimble, Jacksonville and Millfield along the track paralleling Route 13 through the wooded valley, crossing Sunday Creek exactly 20 times in 20 miles. There were no active set off or pick-up points between Glouster and the Ohio River, most Sunday Creek coal seams having played out years before.

Next came Chauncey, which had a bustling yard and two big mines in the steam days and a former interconnection to the west with the abandoned seven-mile Bailey Run Sugar Creek & Athens mining railroad, and Albany with a grade that could present traction problems when wet. Past Chauncey the T&OC paralleled the C&O Hocking Valley line for several miles, eventually crossing it at a sharp angle Armitage, with an interchange track and 125-car siding. The C&O headed south across the Hocking River past an old roundhouse foundation into Athens. We would use the connection onto the C&O to move NYC trains north to Columbus when there was a wreck or track work. The C&O followed a former canal right-of-way up through Nelsonville, Logan, Lancaster, Canal Winchester and Groveport, eventually rejoining the Western at Frankfort Street. While T&OC track was increasingly decrepit by 1969, we were grateful for its fine repair after running the heavily-built but neglected C&O.

Southern Ohio and Hobson

A mile south of Armitage was a crossing of the B&O double-track at Grosvenor, once the B&O's main line to Cincinnati and west, now abandoned. Shortly to the south of this diamond, the NYC crossed into Meigs County and punched in succession through three picturesque short raw (unlined) sandstone bores, known as the Nicholas, Wilson and Dunbar Tunnels. These were 300, 292 and 106 feet in length, respectively, located at NYC Southern Branch MPs 40, 41 and 43, the first two on sharply curving track.

Past the tunnels, the T&OC roamed through the picturesque Southern Ohio hills, now in a very remote area with no mining damage or industry, and only sparse population, passing through Carpenter, Dyesville and Dexter (Southern MP-44), small villages where often no person would be visible. Finally the track came onto a straightaway leading into the mouth of the brick-lined Langsville Tunnel (MP-47). This was a 714-foot dead straight bore through a steep ridge, with a concrete arch facing bearing the date 1908. Since this line was built in 1880-82, the tunnel likely came later to eliminate a challenging grade over or around the ridge. This tunnel was upgraded significantly in 1941. On rare occasions it filled with tiny bats swarming in the column of air pushed ahead of the roaring engine, which acted like a piston in the bore. The bats could end up in a fluttering cloud in the locomotive cab if you neglected to close the windows. The cab broom was useful for swatting them, and each other, when this happened.

The track then rolled past the old Meigs Junction, from which a steeper curving track to the east used to connect to Hobson before a flatter and shorter cut-off route was laid in the 1920s. Past this the land opened up into the wide Ohio Valley floor, where the track ran through a thickly-weeded area curving toward the north switch at Hobson. The engineer would radio Hobson and give our location as "coming through the weeds" – in distinction from our calls to Bremen where we would say "coming through the woods."

Hobson was an ancient empty yard running northeast to southwest with perhaps four active tracks, which seemed to serve only as a crew change location on trains between Charleston and Columbus. No switching engine was ever visible, and there was no evidence of a K&M roundhouse I was told once flourished there. The yard office was a two-story wooden freight house northwest of the track, with a well-lit operator's office, bay window overlooking a trackside platform, and a dark empty yard office area with a few desks, no sign of any remaining paperwork activity. At the south end, overlooking abandoned man-made ponds between the tracks and the Ohio River, there was a lonely switch out onto a single-track C&O branch which ran the 12 miles from Middleport past Cheshire to Gallipolis, where the gigantic mile-long T&OC Ohio River Bridge crossed over to Point Pleasant, West Virginia.

Train crews marking off at Hobson stayed at the venerable brick Hotel Lafayette in Middleport. This establishment was spartan, but had cozy rooms with nice heat and air conditioning, welcome after a long night on duty. Creature comforts were few but nice. There appeared to be no patrons other than the railroad crews. There were good eateries close by, open late, not too particular about a workingman's attire, well-priced hamburgers.

Northbounds from Hobson toward Columbus were NT-5 and NT-7, and the occasional West Virginia coal drag off the Nicholas Fayette & Greenbrier at Swiss or the N&W at Deepwater. Northbound freights usually ran straight through at 30-40 miles per hour, although coal trains labored mightily up Moxie Hill, slowing to 5-10 MPH. With few rail crossings, no “short” cars to be set off and rare pick-ups at Rushville or Thurston, and adequate passing tracks and the double-track main from Bannan inward, northbounds often just took five hours, sometimes non-stop until within Columbus city limits.

Northbounds arriving at West Columbus usually had to wait at Broad Street for yard crews to clear out a receiving track. During peak traffic seasons, NT-5 and especially NT-7 could have 100 or more cars, and had to be doubled back into a second receiving track with radio and hand signal assistance from the north-end yard clerk and the Grandview Tower operator. Through unit trains such as the Peabody drag just changed crews at the West Columbus yard office, and then rolled on through an empty yard track on their way to Toledo.

The T&OC south end had more of an intimate feel of old-time railroading than did the north end. There was less on the ground switching work, fewer delays. Crews there seemed to have known each other for longer and many were each other’s blood relatives or in-laws.

The T&OC south end changed more profoundly than the north when Buckeye Yard replaced West Columbus in 1970. From Buckeye, the southbounds would proceed out onto the heavy-gauge PRR Miami Side double track main at Alton, and roll four miles east and then back onto the Western via the Auburn Track at Scioto Tower, a mile east of the old yard. This was an interesting “big railroading” experience, with overhead signal bridges supporting double semaphores and light arrays, and dense high-speed traffic under Traffic Control System (TCS) central train signaling rather than having manual blocks and train orders, trailer on flatcar symbols, high-wide trains, even passenger trains. Interesting, but an ominous portent of unsettling changes that would soon overtake the T&OC.

(Written from notes & memory from 45 years ago – corrections and comments most welcome.)

T&OC Ancestry – West Columbus to Hobson Jct.

West Columbus to Truro (10.4 mi.) - built 1894-5 by the Toledo & Ohio Central RR Co.

Truro to Thurston (19.6 mi.) - built 1880 by Columbus & Sunday Creek Valley RR Co.

Thurston to Bremen (13.0 mi.) - built 1871-6 by Atlantic & Lake Erie Railway Co.

Bremen to New Lexington (11.2 mi.) - built 1851-6 by Cincinnati & Muskingum Valley RR Co.

New Lexington to Moxahala - (8.0 mi.) - built 1871-5 by Atlantic & Lake Erie Railway Co.

Moxahala to Corning - (4.5 mi.) built 1879-80 by Columbus & Sunday Creek Valley RR Co.

Corning to Hobson (56.4 mi.) – built 1880-83 by Ohio Central RR Co. (5.3 mi. Meigs Switch to Hobson Jct. re-routed by T&OC 1922)