



An artist view of the Columbus Union Depot complex as it looked in 1872. The newspaper article that follows was written in 1859, nine years after the first railroad arrived in Columbus, Ohio. The reporter describes his visit to the facilities at a time when there were four rail lines into Columbus.

Railroads and Railroad Property in Columbus

(Columbus Gazette, November 11, 1859) - In our peregrinations about the city, last week, in search of curious, instructive and interesting items, we accidentally stepped into the Roundhouse belonging to the C., C. & C & L. M. & C. & X. Railroads¹ north of the depot, and we there found the gentlemanly and accommodating clerk, Mr. T.N. Cotant, who kindly furnished us all the information we required. Our stock of knowledge, it is well known, is by no means limited, but in railroad matters, a brakeman on a freight car had forgotten more than we ever expected to learn.

In the Round house we found a number of locomotives undergoing the process of cleaning, scouring and brightening, as much care being taken by the Engineers of those

¹ Cleveland Columbus & Cincinnati; Little Miami; and Columbus & Xenia Railroads. The Little Miami; and Columbus & Xenia Railroads refer to the same railroad.

powerful iron horses, as a groom would take with a favorite racer. Every locomotive has its own Engineer by whom it is run, and under whose especial care it is kept; and it is strange to see the attachment that almost invariably springs up on the part of the officer to the powerful fire-eating machine that too often carries him to destruction.

We have even heard it said that the wife of one of the Engineers on the C., C. & C. Railroad grew so jealous of the attention paid by her liege lord to his black pet, that she threatened him with a divorce, and knowing as we do the fickleness of the sex, we have no doubt of the fact.

Thirty-nine locomotives and three ponies or small engines, are owned and kept by the two companies at this point and when broken or out of order, they are left at the Roundhouse to be repaired. Thirty of these were built at the Cuyahoga Works in Cleveland, three in Cincinnati and six in Boston. The ponies, which are used exclusively for moving and shifting cars on the road, were built in Cleveland where the main repair shops are located. A locomotive weighs from 25 to 27 tons; and usual cost is from \$7,000 to \$8,000.

Laborers are kept constantly on hand to clean up the engine, to rub up the brasses, and to keep it in good condition. For this service they are paid a dollar a day, cleaning an engine being considered an ordinary day's work.

The salary of an engineer is from sixty to sixty-five dollars a month – two trips to Cleveland and back, 540 miles, being considered a good week's work. While the engine is in the shop, the engineer receives from \$1.50 to \$2.00 a day. An engine in complete order will run 25,000 miles in the course of a year, at the cost of about four cents a mile. The oil and tallow used for an engine costs sixty-six dollars a year. There are at present employed in this shop about thirty men – including carpenters, blacksmiths, and machinists, at wages ranging from \$1.00 to \$2.00 a day.

Ten acres of land directly north of the depot belongs to the two Companies, and are used by them jointly. They have built a machine shop 120 feet by 25; a blacksmith shop 100 by 40; paint shop 300 by 40; sheds for lumber 200 by 25; and two passenger car houses 250 by 38 each. 100,000 feet of hard oak lumber, and 300,000 feet of pine lumber are manufactured into running stock in the course of a year, and of iron \$2,500 worth a year, castings \$4,000 worth a year; and the hardware bills for screws, butts, nails, glass &c., about \$6,000 worth a year, making excellent cash customers for our hardware stores. In these shops 76 hands are employed, the pay roll amounting to from \$2,800 to \$3,000 a month. The men are paid monthly, always in the commencement of the week, experience having shown that this time of payment is greatly to the advantage of both the employers and the employees.

We are glad to learn that the L. M. & C. & X. Company intended to manufacture their own passenger cars, and that they are making extensive preparations to carry on the business in these shops. We noticed two cars just finished that will compare favorably with any cars built in the State. These cost \$2,517.33 each, and the trimmings for the seats and sides cost \$5.00 a yard. It requires about a thousand wheels every year from these shops to keep the freight and passenger cars in running trim.

Mr. John Short, an active, energetic business man, has charge of the shops, and the company has every reason to congratulate themselves that they have in their employ so faithful and competent a Superintendent.

To the east of the L. M. & C. & X. shops near the head of Third street, the Central Ohio Railroad companies have six or eight acres upon which they have erected their freight depot, and machine shops. Forty men are kept constantly employed in the various shops at the wages varying from \$1 to \$2.50 per day.

This road has been doing an immense business in the freight line, as will be seen from the fact that last month 1,423 car loads were received from the east at the depot, and 1,514 car loads were forwarded west. Seven freight trains and six passenger trains arrive and depart daily.

Mr. Fell, the active, live agent of the company, pointed out to us in the engine house, the celebrated Taunton engine, *Chauncey Brooks*, run by Henry Hawes, the brag engineer of the road, which made the time from Columbus to the Ohio river, 137 miles, in 3 hours, 46 minutes, including dinner at Zanesville, and all the necessary stops for wood and water.

Much as we have traveled upon railroads we never rightly understood the signals used, until posted by Mr. Fell, and as it is important that everybody should be acquainted with the meaning of them, we give the following explanation:

In all cases wherein the signal is at all *earnest* the train *must be stopped*, so that the person giving the signal may be conversed with, and the precise matter ascertained. Should another train be following, the alarm must of course immediately be carried back to it.

One short, sharp whistle is a signal to apply the brakes – two, let go – three, back the train.

A lantern raised and lowered, vertically, is a signal for starting – swing at right angles or crossways the track, to stop – swung in a circle, back the train.

A Red Flag *waved* upon the track must be regarded as a signal of danger, and be obeyed. So of *other* signals given with energy.

Hoisted at a station, it is a signal for a train to stop.

Stuck up by the road side, it is a signal of danger on the track ahead.

Two red flags carried unfurled upon an Engine, is a warning that another Engine or Train is following, having the same right of road as first or leading train.

One red flag carried unfurled upon an Engine, indicates that the Engine or Train following such a flag will be an irregular train, and must be kept out of the way of all regular trains; but will be avoided by other irregular trains not running under cover of a flag. In case flags are carried upon two regular trains, going in opposite directions, the extra train going East will have the precedence, and the extra train going West will wait for it indefinitely.

The train following a flag must be run with great care at all curves and obscured places of the road, on the ground that the flag may not have been everywhere noticed. Whenever a regular train, wearing a flag, meets another regular train, it will be stopped, and information given at what is following, and where it will be met.

All persons doing work along the road, on seeing the flag flying on an Engine, will keep the track clear until the Engine thus announced has passed, or, if repairs are necessary, make them only after stationing a flagman where signal can be seen half a mile.

Enginemen and Conductors of trains, carrying a flag, *will take great pains to direct attention to it*, explaining to Way Agents the meaning of it. And it will be the duty of all Way Agents to learn the meaning of flags thus carried.

Lanterns will be used at night in place of the Red Flags, and to be of a red color when at hand: *but to be regarded though not red*. As a signal of a train or Engine following, it will be placed in front to the Engine.

The Columbus, Piqua and Indianapolis road, which has ever been managed upon the most economical plan, is making arrangements to improve the grounds about the depot. From Mr. Charles W. Smith, the obliging agent, we gather the following information.

The old farm house, long used as *Ticket Office*, is torn away, and the bank being excavated for the erection of a new freight House. A track is being laid to run along the side of the Union Depot, and in immediate connection with the other roads. The Company has ten Engines in good condition, four of which have been purchased since March last – two manufactured by M.W. Baldwin & Co., of Philadelphia, one by Niles & Co., of Cincinnati, one by Blandy, at Zanesville. Rolling stock now worked, consist of 11 passenger car, 3 baggage and mail, 61 box, 26 platform, 21 stock and 6 lime cars. A new Engine or Roundhouse has been built during the past summer. The shops employ 36 hands, including engineers and firemen. Ran three trains daily each way, two passenger, one freight. At the Scioto River Bridge and trestle work, large stone arches and abutments have just been built, which places the whole structure in perfect safety.

The land belonging to persons holding the real estate bonds, consisting of 100 acres, surrounding the shops and extending to the Olentangy river, have just been laid out in lots, and will soon be sold at public auction. The most of these lots are very finely located; those consisting of the bottom land are very valuable for gardening purposes; these contain from one to two acres each.

The road is now wholly worked under the supervision of John H. Bradley, of Indianapolis, agent of the receivers. (Length of road, 102 ½ miles.)

The Columbus and Xenia Road, under the prompt and decisive action of the energetic President, Wm. B. Hubbard, Esq., maintains its well-earned reputation of being one of the safest and best managed roads in the west. We are glad to learn that it is in contemplation to run an extra train to and from Xenia, for the accommodation of business

men living along the line and for the convenience of the local trade. The express passenger train will then be able to make even more rapid time than at present, as they will only be required to stop for wood and water. The greatest care and circumspection has been paid by the President to every department of the Road, especially in reference to the prevention of accidents. Every bridge on the road has been carefully inspected, the timbers have been bored into so as to judge their soundness, and where the least defect is observed the timbers have been resupplied. The water and cattle courses have been built over with iron and stone bridges. The road has been fenced, ditched and drained, and is now safe from the inroads of cattle or the overflow of water.

The Company is now making preparations to build a new spacious Passenger Depot at West Jefferson, the increase of local travel on that part of the road making such an accommodation highly necessary.

The Union Depot, at the head of High street has been greatly improved. A new Dining Room, 85 feet long by 24 feet wide, neatly finished, and capable of seating 100 persons, under the direction of Mr. Ogden, the proprietor, has added greatly to this convenience of travelers, and the table is said to be unequalled for its bountiful supplies and the delivery of the fare. A barber shop, wash rooms, and sitting rooms have been fitted up in good style, and the neatness, good order, and regularity prevailing at all times, is worthy of public commendation. All the water needed for cleaning purposes is supplied from the celebrated Sulphur Spring in the C. C. & C. Car House, which is brought in pipes to the Depot, a distance of 1,500 feet, at the cost of \$1,000. The quantity of water discharged from this spring, by actual measurement, is 7,200 gallons in 24 hours, the column of water being thrown up perpendicularly about six feet. It is strange that this artesian well, for such it is, should have been struck within a few feet of the surface, when the one in the State Yard, only half a mile distant, refused to furnish water, although augurs have been vainly boring for it at the depth of half a mile.

The people in the North part of the city will be pleased to learn that the L. M. & C. & X., & C. C. & C. Company will build a new Freight Depot next Spring, at the south-east corner of their grounds, near Third street and North Public Lane, with a view to make up all trains on their own grounds, and thus they will relieve High Street from all further use for such purposes.

We are glad to see a disposition manifested by the officers of the various roads, while advancing their own interests, not to overlook the interests of Columbus. Their building and repairing can be done as cheap here as at any other point, and our mechanics are not surpassed in skill by their brethren in any section of the State. We have no objections to Cincinnati and Cleveland having their share of the work, but, in all modesty, we would respectfully suggest that hereafter a fair proportion should be awarded to the mechanics at the capital of the state.

For more information on Columbus' first Union Depot click the following --

http://www.columbusrailroads.com/new/?menu=05Steam_Railroads&submenu=33Stations%26_Depots&submenu4=07Union%20Depot%20No.%201%201851-1875