

PRRTHS

BUCKEYE CHAPTER

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IN THIS ISSUE: CHAPTER MEETING IN DENNISON
HOSTING A NATIONAL CONVENTION
THE PENNSYLVANIA RAILROAD IN INDIANA

NEXT MEETING IN DENNISON, SUNDAY, SEPT. 21

For the next meeting we return to the former Pennsylvania Railroad Depot in Dennison, Ohio, now site of a major museum about the Pennsylvania Railroad. We will gather at 11:30 to order individually from the Trax Diner's excellent menu, with the formal meeting to follow the lunch. After the meeting, we will have self-guided tours of the museum at no charge to members. We understand the museum has acquired some PRR cars since our last visit, so this is your chance to see these. .

DIRECTIONS: Take US 250 east to Dennison exit, and go south. Turn right onto Second Street. At the tracks, turn right on Center Street to the Depot.

The small village of Dennison, Ohio lies halfway between Columbus, OH and Pittsburgh, PA, exactly 100 miles to the east and west of these major cities. This was not a coincidence, but specifically chosen because a steam engine only went 100 miles before it had to take on coal, water and change crews. Thus, Dennison is a true railroad town in every sense - it was founded in 1864 as a water stop for the railroad. Dennison became one of the most complete railroad shops and yards in the country at the turn-of-the 20th Century, boasting 40 acres of railroad shops, 21 passenger trains a day, 21 freight trains a day and 3,000 railroad employees, and became a major freight and passenger terminal.

The Dennison yards experienced a golden era until hit hard by a strike in 1921. Despite resurgence during wartime, the yards never recovered. As shops closed, the yards experienced a steady decline. The last passenger train stopped at the Depot in the 1970s. In the early 1980s, the line was downgraded and freight was rerouted to other Conrail lines. The State of Ohio purchased the tracks, and in 1992, the Ohio Central Railroad Systems became operators of the line, renaming it the Columbus & Ohio River Railroad. Since that time, tourist train excursions have operated on the line, and attention has focused on rebuilding the freight business.

The Dennison Depot, built in 1873 and listed on the National Register of Historic Places, stands as a proud symbol of Dennison's vast railroad heritage. It reopened in 1989 in memory of the many railroad employees, servicemen and women, and travelers who passed through its doors. The Dennison Depot is perhaps most famous for its role during WWII. The Dennison Depot Servicemen's Canteen operated from March 19, 1942 to April 8, 1946. A million and a half G.I.s were served free food, coffee and smiles by 3,987 volunteers from eight counties at the Dennison Depot Salvation Army Servicemen's Canteen. The Canteen operated 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, providing a great boost to the home front effort. .

Today the depot is the only remaining railroad building left in the original 40 acre yards. The Depot, built in 1873, was saved from demolition in 1984, restored by a strong grassroots community effort, and is today a symbol of pride and heritage. The Depot now houses a Museum, Restaurant and Gift Shop. Open year round, it offers a full calendar of exhibits, special events and family programs. In March of 2007, a new wing opened at the Museum, composed of five railroad coaches attached to the building.

HOSTING A NATIONAL CONVENTION, by President Al Doddroe

The major topic for discussion will be a final decision on hosting the 2011, or 2013 Annual PRR T&HS meeting. Akron/Canton have been ruled out due to no hotels that can meet the Society requirements for display space. We have identified three hotels in the Columbus area that can meet the requirements for 2011. We expect to have proposals from them to present at the meeting on the 21st.

Assuming we elect to host the event we will be needing to designate people to Chair the following specific activities: Registration, Program, Field trips, Model room, Vendor Room, Layout tours and Hotel and Banquet Liaison. Registration and Hotel Liaison chair persons have already been tentavily identified. It is possible for one person to assume more than one responsibility, however, responsibility for more than two areas is discouraged. We have in hand a set of Annual Meeting Guidelines to use to guide us in hosting the event. We will be seeking volunteers to Chair the other activities.

Once we are selected to be the meeting host, all arrangements for the meeting are our responsibility, with guidance from the National, as required. The financial requirements are borne by the host Chapter, however, the National can provide some seed money if it is needed.

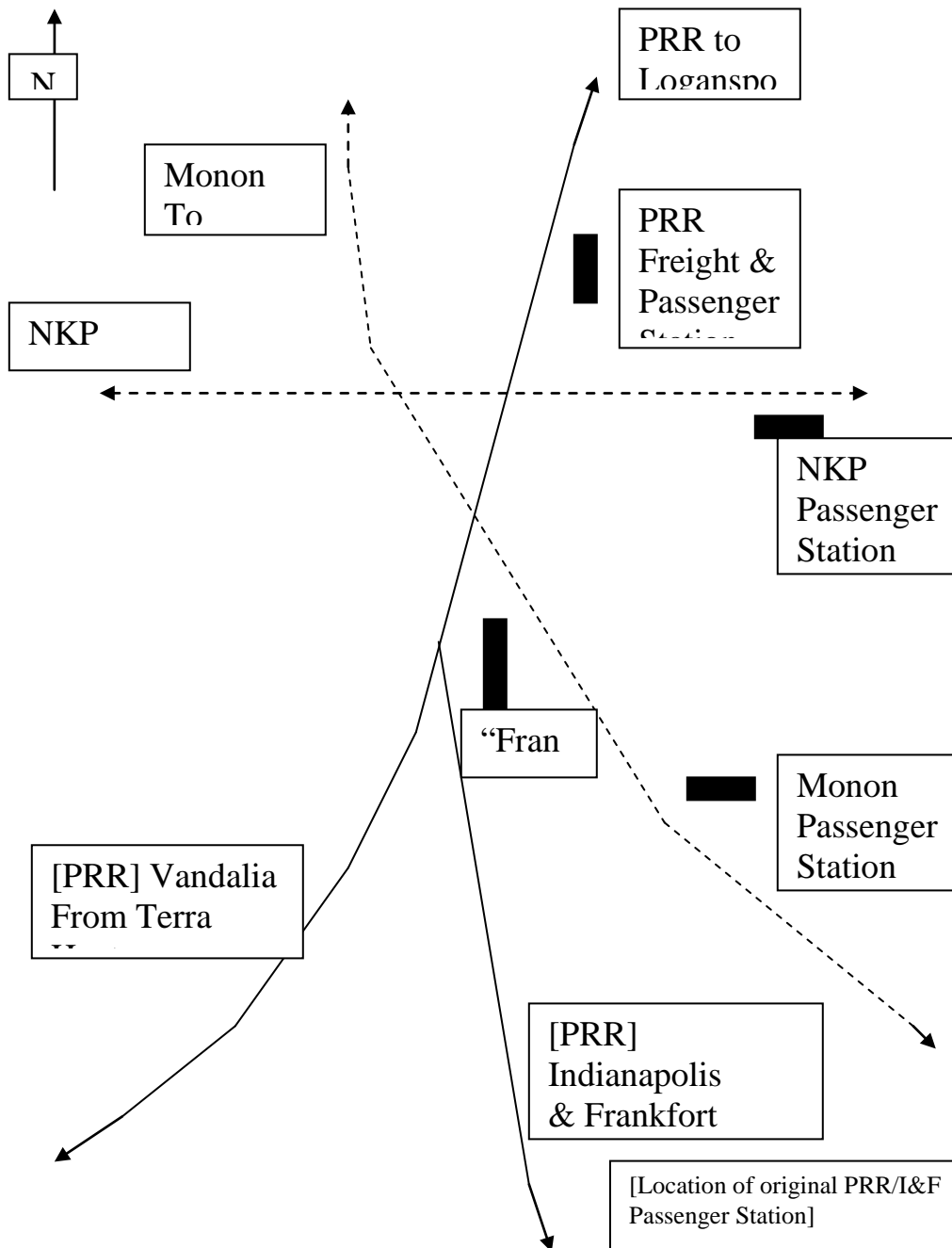
We realize that there is nothing left of the PRR in the Columbus area, and have expressed that fact to the National officers numerous times in the past. They never the less have continued to express interest in having the annual meeting here. That being the case it will be our challenge to provide a strong in-the-house program to showcase the PRR in Columbus to make up for the lack of physical remnants of the Pennsy in this area. We also should look for Lines West topics for lines in and out of Columbus to help point out the importance of Columbus, for instance; the Panhandle, CA&C, Sandusky, Columbus & Xenia, etc.

The Indianapolis & Frankfort Railroad Company: A Small Portion of Lines West

By Bert Kram

In the early Twentieth Century the Pennsylvania Railroad was confronted with annoying and expensive traffic problems in the middle of Indiana. Traffic from the south and southwest was increasing. However, the PRR did not own or control a direct route from Indianapolis to either Chicago or the growing industrial areas of northern Indiana. Coal mined near PRR lines in southwest Indiana had to be moved first to Indianapolis, then west along the PRR's PCC&StL line to Terra Haute, then northeast via a portion of the former Vandalia – by then controlled by the PRR - to Logansport in the north central part of the state before going via other PRR lines on to Chicago or northern Indiana. The alternative was to move the trains into the congested center of Indianapolis, then via trackage rights over the Lake Erie & Western RR roughly 50 miles north to Kokomo, Ind. From there trains could move via PRR's Panhandle northwest into Logansport and then on to Chicago and the industrial north. How was the company to avoid the traffic congestion of the center city, fees for use of the LE&W, and the time and expense of the circuitous routes?

The answer was to construct a new rail line directly from the west side of Indianapolis 41 miles to the northwest to a junction with the former Vandalia in Frankfort, Ind., so that northbound traffic could then move via that PRR route the remaining 38 miles to Logansport. The resulting line superseded the prior routes to become PRR's mainline from Louisville KY via Indianapolis to Chicago, as well as a principal route for transporting coal from southwest Indiana to the north.



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The new line was incorporated by Pennsylvania RR interests in 1913 as the Indianapolis and Frankfort Railroad Company. The route was laid out, construction authorized, and grading commenced in 1916. It had the natural benefit of being constructed over essentially flat topography. There was, however, the matter of a potential crossing at grade of the busy NYCRR (Big Four) in Lebanon IN. To solve that issue, the PRR constructed an elevated right of way through Lebanon, bridging a number of streets and crossing over the Big Four in the process. An interchange connection was made by constructing a ramp down to the Big Four. Fills and cuts were used elsewhere to create a level route. Some 1,500 workers moved over 3 million cubic feet of earth in the construction process. The line, laid with 100 pound rail, was completed, opened, and placed in full operation in 1918. The cost was \$4,960,000.

New passenger stations were constructed in the two principal cities north of Indianapolis: Lebanon and Frankfort. Those stations, of the same or very similar design, were handsome brick structures with large arched windows. The Frankfort station was built in 1922, but was in service only about 11 years. No doubt due to the Great Depression, which also ended PRR passenger trains on Frankfort to Terre Haute line, PRR passenger service was consolidated into the PRR freight station about a mile to the north.

The Lebanon station not only continued in service until the end of passenger service on the line at the advent of Amtrak, but survives to this day, restored and in use as the Depot at Trackage Restaurant & Bar. The station is located at ground level with the elevated right of way looming behind.

During PRR years the line was known as the "I&F Branch." Originally part of the Indianapolis Division, in the last PRR years it was assigned to the Southwest Division of the Western Region. It extended from the PCC&StL in Ben Davis near Indianapolis, north to Frankfort and a junction with the Crawfordsville Branch, the former Vandalia Line that extended from Frankfort southwest through Crawfordsville to Terre Haute. The remainder of the Indianapolis to Logansport mainline was the continuation of the old Vandalia Line from Frankfort north to Logansport, which was also included within the designation "I&F Branch."

When first opened, the I&F enabled the PRR to transfer 4 daily passenger trains and 12 freight trains off the Lake Erie & Western directly onto its own tracks. Traffic remained heavy during the later PRR years with many mainline and local freight trains and three regular passenger trains, including the South Wind.

In the 1960's and 1970's systemic changes of the eastern railroads and the fact that I&F hosted little on-line industry compelled downgrading the line. First the Crawfordsville Branch southwest of Frankfort was abandoned by the Penn Central in segments from 1972 to 1976. Then Conrail abandoned the portion of the old Vandalia from north of Frankfort to Bringhurst. Surprisingly, the I&F survived. The survival of the I&F is attributable to some thoughtful work by the Conrail sales department. In exchange for access to another industry, the Norfolk & Western Rwy. granted Conrail trackage rights over the N&W in Frankfort from the Conrail/N&W (former PRR/NKP) interchange and west through N&W's yard to the large ADM soybean processing plant on the western edge of that city. The ADM plant continues to grow and prosper, resulting in ongoing traffic for CSX, the current owner of the I&F.

The I&F can be seen as it passes via bridge over I-65 on the south side Lebanon. The concrete abutments still bear PRR logos. To reach the line in Lebanon, exit I-65 Interchange 140 (Ind. Hwy. 32) and proceed east a short distance on South Street to again pass under the I&F. The Depot at Trackage Restaurant & Bar - the handsome former PRR passenger station - is immediately east of the I&F on the north side of the street. Notice also the large seal cast into the east embankment, as well as the former NYC interchange ramp that descends to the northwest.

The I&F entered Frankfort from the south via an elevated right of way that gradually curved to the northeast to conform to the pre-existing Vandalia line that entered the city from the southwest. The actual junction and "Frank" block station formerly were immediately north of the Walnut Street (Ind. Hwy. 28)

grade crossing on that city's west side. The site of the original I&F passenger station and a wye were about a quarter mile south of the Walnut Street crossing along the east side of the right of way. All of the former PRR structures in that area are gone except the line currently used by CSX. The structure that held the last PRR passenger and freight stations exists. It is located about a quarter mile north at the Morrison Street grade crossing.

Frankfort, of course, was and is best known for its Nickel Plate Road facilities. Although not accessible at this time, the former NKP coaling tower and round house still exist about a quarter mile north of the PRR/CSX Walnut Street crossing. Norfolk Southern keeps the yard active.

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