

PRRTHS BUCKEYE CHAPTER

Volume 8, No 1 – February 2011

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ELECTION OF OFFICERS

PREVIEW THE NATIONAL CONVENTION, MEET AT THE RAMADA FEBRUARY 20



We will preview the national convention Sunday, February 20, at the Ramada Hotel, 4900 Sinclair Road in Columbus. The program will outline plans for the national convention we will host there May 12-15. Plans are underway for an extensive list of presenters as well as two bus trips to nearby PRR attractions.

The program will also include the annual election of officers for the chapter. President Al Doddroe is looking for an able person to run for Treasurer of the chapter, a post currently vacant. Russ Thompson will show some slides at the meeting. It is time for annual chapter dues which you can pay at the meeting or send to chapter president Al Doddroe at 12827 Commercial Point Road, Ashville, Ohio 43103.

Directions to the Ramada are as follows:

From the North, follow I-71 to exit 116, Morse Road. The exit ramp leads to Sinclair Road. Turn right on Sinclair and the hotel just a short distance on the right.

From the south, follow -71 to exit 116, Morse Road. Turn left on Morse Road, then right on Sinclair Road. The hotel is just a short distance past the first traffic light, on the right.

This is your newsletter, so we depend on members to supply articles for it. Share your knowledge and experiences with members of the chapter. You can Email them to me, Gene Stebbins, at genestebbins@att.net or mail them to me at 2075 Maplewood Road, Stow, Ohio 44224.

[Editor's note: The following was sent to me some time ago. Unfortunately, in the course of editing and filing, the author's name was lost. For this I apologize. If the author will step forward, I will gladly acknowledge him or her, with more apologies. But it is a good piece and especially significant as we get set to host the national convention.]

The Last Days of Columbus Shops

My venture into St. Clair Street shops was about late 1970. Four of us had gone to the Ohio Railway Museum on a Sunday to see steam, but the operation was cancelled, so we decided to go see the PRR shops. We found it eerie, as if it were lunch time with no men, no engines and cars at all. We parked at the west end of the roundhouse and entered through the facility via an open roundhouse door. There were open office doors with lights on, papers spread across desks like there had been a fire drill.

We walked into what was probably the Master Mechanic's office where the lights were on. The floor was covered by heaps of paper and there was an open window. Just outside was a green dumpster, containing all kinds of bound books. Most were operator's manuals for diesel-electric locomotives, about every one on the PRR roster with only a few exceptions. I collected as many as I could, transferring from the dumpster to my car trunk. Every office was about the same, papers scattered around on the floor, empty desks, lights left on and a dumpster close-by.

We went into a long shop building, probably a back shop next to the roundhouse. There we met a guard, who learning of our sincere interest in railroading, let us walk around. There were a couple of indoor tracks in use for the loading of piggy-back cars and trailers and flats there. . We walked into a locker room and lunch room where we found lunch boxes but no food on the table, a few hard hats on top of lockers, left over clothes such as overalls and denim coats, gloves, etc. This could have been a fire drill the way it looked.

We went into the power plant and here was N6b caboose that had been moved in here for an office, still in PRR paint. I remember the knuckles being missing from both couplers. It was almost homey. The guard told us someone had bought it and it was to be moved out in coming days. The boilers were cold, apparently for some time, but they were set-up ready to take a fire any time

We then started up through the floors of all the taller buildings which obviously had not been used in many years. There were some electric motor parts or part of a machine tool scattered about, but there were more pigeon droppings than anything else. The parts had little brass oval plates and many were cast with the PCC&STL plate or PENNA LINES plate and a blank area for a number, probably an inventory number of some kind.

We went all the way up to the roof, and peered out the windows of this six or seven story building. The entire yard below was completely empty, It was stunning to see that here was a place that just weeks prior had employed hundreds of men, but now lay abandoned.. We could see the platforms of Union Station to the west some distance off.

We went through every building, now empty. Some had large overhead bridge cranes rated at perhaps 150 tons or some massive number, and they looked to have been used perhaps to lift locomotives. Then there were smaller ones, some running on rails that went through the building walls to a now empty storage yard outside.. Some of the shop buildings had end-grain wooden block floors, and others were

concrete. One had just dirt and although it was apparent it had not been used for many years, this looked to have been a blacksmith's shop. There were a few concrete pads that made me think it was perhaps the place for a long-gone steam hammer.

A garage of some kind back in the complex had doors pulled down, but they weren't locked, so we opened one to see what was in there. Hard to believe but the hump rider's motor cars were there, obviously unused in quite some time but they were all sitting there. They were painted yellow with PRR stenciled on them in black letters and looked like stretched motor cars. I would guess each might have hauled 10 to 15 men easily. About a month later I went back and there were some men there in a PC truck, the doors were open, and they were discussing the sale of those cars, but I could not hear to whom.

On the next trip back the rider cars were all gone and the garage was empty. The roundhouse was clean but empty. It still had the smoke jacks and the smell of coal smoke lingered. The turntable was lined for a stall but the power lines had been cut, so I knew its days were over. The wreck train track was empty.

We walked over to the coal dock which was still complete. One of the guys climbed to the top and snapped some pictures. Over on the south side of the yards was the icing platform and ice house. It looked as though it would handle the next reefer train at any moment.. To the east of the shop buildings were smaller one story buildings, with track components stored all around and these buildings were locked. To the south side of the yards we could see the main line which was fairly busy. But trains just glided by, and none even slowed down.

I made two more trips back through May 1971. Some salvage of track in the yards was beginning and early demolition of the roundhouse had begun. It was no place for a curious kid, so I tucked it in my memories and never went back.

I did visit the Station Master at Columbus Union Station a few times in 1970 and 1971, just prior to the start of Amtrak. He was an interesting fellow, letting me walk though many of the closed areas of the station once including the platform to see what it looked like there. At this point he was more of a museum curator than a railroad employee. About the only people hanging around the station were homeless and drunks. Unfortunately, it was obvious this magnificent structure had gone to seed many years ago, and its days were numbered.



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Please mail to Al Doddroe, 12827 Commercial Point Drive, Ashville, Ohio, 43103.

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FOR YOUR SUPPORT**