Toledo & Ohio Central Northbound Trains from Columbus – the 1960s

by James M. Cavanaugh

The daily mixed freight trains departing West Columbus northbound on the T&OC Western Branch in the 1960s were NT-5 and NT-7. Interestingly, the "NT" stood for Norfolk-Toledo. These trains terminated at Stanley Yard, four miles south of downtown Toledo at T&OC (NYC) Western Branch Milepost 4, although they often included blocks of 25-50 cars bound west for Elkhart, Indiana near South Bend. NT-5 and NT-7 were continuations of trains that arrived at West Columbus from Dickinson, West Virginia, via Hobson, on the Ohio River. Both trains, NT-7 especially, were made up largely of petrochemical industry traffic gathered in the 45-mile stretch of the T&OC Southern Branch in West Virginia between Nitro (Southern MP 111 - mileage there was south from Corning, Ohio) and Alloy (Southern MP 157), and with a mix of covered hopper, tank car and coal hopper loads assembled at Dickinson Yard (MP 140). NT-5 and NT-7 were augmented with the NYC's local traffic from shippers in Columbus, mainly from South Columbus industries, off the East Columbus Branch and from the big Landmark elevator at Truro, and interchange traffic from the NYC's Big Four line and the other four railroads in Columbus, the Pennsylvania, B&O, C&O and N&W.

The T&OC's coal traffic came in several varieties. Steam coal moved in large multiple carloads, including whole "unit trains" of coal hoppers for a single customer destination. This was pulverized bitumen bound for combustion in distant power plants. Metallurgical coal for coking and the steel industry, and chemical coal for industrial process plants, was larger shiny lumps moving in smaller lots, often just one or two carloads. Much of the coal moving between Columbus and Toledo originated on the Western Branch in Perry County, from the Sunday Creek coalfields. Large additional tonnages came off the T&OC Hitop Branch, an old orphan line of the T&OC predecessor Kanawha & Michigan, reached via the B&O from Charleston. Coal also came onto the T&OC from the Norfolk & Western at Deepwater bridge (Southern MP 158). At times, blocks of steam coal hoppers, sometimes even whole 100-car unit trains of it, came to us from beyond the end of the T&OC Southern Branch 239 miles south of Columbus at Swiss, West Virginia (Southern MP 163). There the NYC interchanged end-to-end with the Nicholas, Fayette & Greenbrier (jointly owned by the NYC and C&O) that reached deep into the Appalachian coalfields.

The bulk of T&OC northbound coal from Columbus moved via three or four weekly 100-car 10,000-ton Peabody and Consolidated unit trains. These were big square-ended 100-ton special purpose hoppers without the usual flap doors on the bottom. These cars were lifted up, wheels and all, and dumped over whole by gigantic equipment at their discharge points. Pulled by three or four SD40s or SD45s, the loads of yellow and green-liveried Peabodys originated at Claybank, just north of Moxahala on the Western Branch (MP 189), and ran through to the Consumers' Power Essexville generator at Bay City, Michigan, interchanging off the NYC at Toledo onto the Ann Arbor Railroad. The

black Consols, painted red on one end (and thus named the "woodpeckers" after the common Ohio redheaded bird), ran to some unknown power plant site to the north. Other northbound coal unit trains were destined for the enormous Lakefront Docks in downtown Toledo to be loaded on Great Lakes ships for ports from Duluth to Montreal.

Northbound crews reported for work at the West Columbus yard office on McKinley Avenue at Yale. Our routine was always to have the head brakeman (the juniormost train crew member who would ride the engines) drive the conductor's car to the north (west) end of the yard, over at Grandview Avenue, which both got the brakeman to where he started work, and positioned the conductor's car where he would end up after the return southbound trip. Once at the Grandview end, the head brakeman would meet the engine crew at the roundhouse, back the locomotive units out from the hostler tracks onto the "runner" track along the south perimeter of West Columbus, then move forward onto the Grandview Tower interlocking plant. After the Grandview Tower operator realigned the switches for the locomotives, we would reverse and back down on the north side yard lead, with the brakeman out on the ground throwing switches, and back into the track holding the waiting train, couple on and cut in the air hoses to pump off the brakes. Usually northbound freights were made up in Tracks 12-18. Meanwhile the conductor and flagman would walk the several hundred yards west from the yard office up the yard track to the caboose. The engineer, conductor and car men on the ground did the mandatory air brake test, with the crew in the caboose watching the air gauge as the pressure inched toward 80 PSI, the brakes below the caboose floor coming to life, creaking and hissing as their reservoirs filled, and as the brake linkages and shoes first tightened and then went slack. While this was taking place, the brakeman would walk over to Grandview Tower to collect the train orders and pick up any good recent gossip to share during the trip.

NT-5 and NT-7

NT-5 was typically the T&OC's first daily "hotshot" train, usually called right at 10 AM. NT-5 was known to some crews as the "Elkhart Cannonball" or the "Weed Bender." The engine consist was usually three of the NYC's four-axle EMD hood units. This train was a through block of time freight, and there was no doubt the management wanted NT-5 to step lively. On the Western, northbounds had precedence and southbounds took siding, although strangely, the passing tracks north of Ridgeway all seemed to have dispatcher-activated switches at the south end and run-through switches at the north end. It would have been a lot less work for all if the northbounds took siding, but they did not.

NT-5 usually had 75-100 cars, often (but not always) with a 10-15 car Cleveland or Indianapolis block to be set off via the interchange at Ridgeway (Western MP-81, 50 miles north of West Columbus) for the NYC's Big Four mainline. This was the "Main Line Cincinnati to Burt" in our timetable; the Big Four shows up as the Cleveland-Columbus-Cincinnati-St. Louis or "CCC&StL" in older timetables and Columbus maps. The Ridgeway set off was a double-time move, starting with the train pulling up along Hayes

siding south of Ridgeway Tower, the head brakeman dropping off and uncoupling the set-off cut, then re-boarding the engine. The Ridgeway operator then pulled his interlocking levers and switched the engine and drop off cars through crossovers onto the interconnection track in the southeast quadrant south of the diamond. We would leave Indy cars at the west end of this track, but for Cleveland cars, the engine pulled the cut east for about a mile through the Big Four south siding, at the east end of which the brakeman cut off the cars from the locomotive. He then had to go ring Ridgeway Tower from a hornet-infested wooden phone box and ask permission to switch out onto the Big Four main. After pulling up onto the main, the engine then reversed back west to the operator-controlled Ridgeway plant, back through crossovers and the curving interchange track onto the Western Main, coupled back onto the train, pumped off the air brakes, and was ready to resume its northbound journey.

Barring emergency, NT-5 would have no further pickups or set offs, and usually had at most brief stops to wait for crossing trains at the Erie Lackawanna south of Kenton (MP-73), PRR Chicago Main Line at Dunkirk (MP-61), N&W at Mortimer (MP-39) or the B&O at Galatea (MP-32). NT-5 often could make Stanley Yard in 7-10 hours total on-duty time, including the block drop at Ridgeway.

That was usually a pleasant, dry day for the crew. Under our collective bargaining agreement, we got paid on the basis of both mileage and time. We got a minimum ten hours and 31 minutes for the mileage on the Western between West Columbus and Stanley Tower, regardless of how long it took, plus after 10:31 we went on time-and-a-half overtime. Thus everyone thought the ideal things were either to get a quick run, getting paid for 10:31 while working fewer hours, or to get deep into the lucrative overtime pay. By law, you could not work more than 16 hours without rest, and if you hit that limit you "violated" and had to stop your train and wait for a relief crew.

Conversely, everything about NT-7 was a miserable dark purgatory on the ground, in heat, cold, rain, sleet and hunger. A call for NT-7 meant a long tedious night of switching, waiting for red signals to go yellow or for the appearance of the headlight of a limping southbound that had to clear into the far end of a siding ahead. NT-7 was usually called after 8 PM and often around 11 PM or midnight. Power could be anything cobbled together, ranging from a pair of older Alco four-axle hood units plus a cabless F9 covered wagon “B” unit, to three F9 covered wagon “A” units hitched up elephant-style (nose-to-tail, all cabs facing forward) plus a GP9 or maybe an old 1,350 HP Alco covered wagon, never easy on the eye.

This hardworking train would have 80-100 cars, with ten or so for Ridgeway and maybe another 20 to be set off at perhaps five or six locations along the way to Stanley Yard. NT-7 also had many pickups from north-facing switch shipper sidings. Sometimes the fun might start with a pickup of short cars (i.e., cars bound for points short of Toledo) at Grandview Siding, within sight of West Columbus Yard. There were no set offs until past Marysville (MP-106, which territory was switched by the Marysville Turn)

but there were often drops and pickups at Raymonds (MP-96), West Mansfield elevator (MP-89), Horton elevator (MP-88), Ridgeway, Kenton (MP-72), Williamstown (MP-58), Arlington (MP-53), downtown Findlay yard (MP-44), the Whirlpool plant at Mortimer (MP-38), Bowling Green (MP-21) or B&R Mill (MP-7). This was the northbound job most likely to "violate," meaning a fresh crew would have to be shuttled out by one of the NYC's green-liveried crew vans to take over and finish NT-7's arduous run.

Northbound unit trains from West Columbus were virtually always 100-110 cars of through coal hoppers, with no planned stops. There was nothing for the train crew to do except ride, unless the train broke a knuckle or tore out a drawbar, or had some other unplanned calamity, all very uncommon north of Columbus. However, these heavy trains (10,000 tons or more compared with about 3,000-4,000 for the average mixed freight) would demand a lot more skill and work from the engineer, starting with getting up out of West Columbus. (The triple-preposition phrase "up out of", which would make a high school English teacher cringe, meant getting a heavy train started from a dead stop, moving up a grade.) When we changed unit train crews at West Columbus and got a clear block at Grandview Tower there was always enough diesel power and tractive effort, with four GE F9 covered wagons or three good four or six-axle GE EMD hood units, to move up out of town. But the engines would be straining and using sand on a wet day getting up past the PRR Bradford Main crossing at Mounds (MP 126) and the engines would still be roaring, throttles in notch eight, all the way up past the old elevator at Amlin, the new elevator at Kile and Arnold Hill approaching Scottslawn (MP-108). Lunda Hill and the grade north of Kenton were also a strain, but it was very rare for these trains to lay down on hills north of Columbus. Beyond Dunkirk (MP-61) the grades were gentle to undetectable.

In steam days, West Columbus to Kile was serious helper territory, with freight and coal trains double-heading up from Grandview, and dropping the helper engine at "Helper Siding" north of Kile. The diesels that followed in the early 1950s did not have much more horsepower than steam, but with all-powered axles they had a lot more tractive effort and could usually make it up from West Columbus without slipping. The T&OC ended the "helper territory" status of this section by the 1960s and the former "Helper Siding" was taken out.

An occasional ugly problem grinding a heavy coal train uphill from Columbus (and far more often at Moxahala on the south end of the Western Branch) was a pulled-out broken coupler knuckle or drawbar. If a knuckle broke under the strain of the engine's battle with gravity, a sturdy young brakeman could wrestle a spare one (about 80 pounds of cast steel) from the engine back to the scene, pull the pins and replace it, and get back under way in maybe an hour. If a drawbar ripped, you cannot fix that with tools and spares on board the train, so we had to set the car off at the next siding to be repaired in place. However, if the drawbar was on the "business end" of the car (the front end, toward the locomotive) we had no way to couple onto the car to pull it to the next siding. We would have to get a chain or cable and release the air brakes

(dangerous because, of course, this mess by definition starts on a steep hill) and gingerly pull the car out to a repair point with the brakeman hanging on the car ladder near the hand brake wheel in case the car broke loose. A broken drawbar on front end of car usually means you are going to “violate” before the night is over (i.e., use up your 16 hours). You could really use some hot coffee right about then.

The Western Branch

The T&OC north end was a manual block line from West Columbus to Ridgeway. In manual block territory, trains ran under written train orders and were guided by locally-controlled manual signals from manned "towers" at the beginning and end of each “block” of track. Between Grandview Tower and Ridgeway Tower there were two blocks – one from Grandview to Scottslawn (MP-108 near Marysville, where the operator sat in a roomy one-floor building) with the crossing of the Pennsylvania’s Bradford side main protected by the interlocking at Mounds (with its tiny “tower”) and another block from Scottslawn to Ridgeway, crossed by a little-used Erie track at Peoria (MP-98) which had a remotely-controlled signal.

Trains received hand-typed or written orders at Grandview, Scottslawn and Ridgeway. Typical train orders came attached to a small green “Clearance Form A” cover note addressed to “C&E (Conductor and Engineer) extra 1640 north Ridgeway”, with the numbers of the train orders following. Orders were individual pages, typed or printed in block letters on onionskin translucent paper forms, reading “Engine 1640 (one-thousand-six-hundred-forty) run extra Grandview to Scottslawn, take siding at Scottslawn, meet extra 1773 (one-thousand-seven-hundred-seventy-three) south.” All numbers were spelled out to avoid mistakes. If the order just said “meet extra 6201 (six-two-zero-one) south at Scottslawn” without saying which train was to take siding, then under the timetable rules, the southbound train took siding. The northbound would have to stop at the south switch and wait for the southbound to get into the clear. If the dispatcher wanted the northbound to take siding, then the order would have to say expressly that train was to take siding.

North of Ridgeway, the T&OC shared the rails with the NYC Big Four's Bellefontaine-Stanley trains that entered the Western at Ridgeway, using the high-speed sweeping northwest quadrant interconnection. This portion of the Western was train control (TCS) territory, remotely dispatched from Columbus Union Depot, with all automated signals, activated usually by the very precise Mr. Pearl West. Crossings at Ridgeway (the NYC Big Four), and Dunkirk (the PRR Chicago Main Line) were protected by towers with Operators on duty at all times, and other crossings at Kenton (the Erie Lackawanna at MP-73), Arlington (the Akron, Canton & Youngstown, MP 50), North Findlay (N&W, MP-43), Mortimer (Nickel Plate, MP-39) and Galatea (B&O, MP-32) were protected by signals controlled from Columbus. Much of the Western line north of Ridgeway was welded “ribbon” rail, without joints. This tended to stay in much better shape under heavy traffic (more than 30 million tons annually here) than the nuts and bolts portion

of the Western south of Ridgeway after the merged Penn Central began to scrimp on maintenance in 1968.

Out on the Road

The T&OC was a remarkably laid out and engineered line, almost devoid of curvature. From Grandview the track ran north past Marble Cliff, passing one of the many stone quarries on the line, up past Mounds, Highway Siding, Amlin and Kile to Scottslawn (MP 108), site of the big O.M. Scott complex just south of Marysville. Scotts provided the NYC with some 3,400 loads annually in the 1960s, making it, along with the Whirlpool Plant north of Findlay, the main source of on-line shipper business. The Western track here was so straight that at night, sitting at Scottslawn, you could sometimes see the headlight of a train at Mounds 18 miles to the south. At Scottslawn was the first of our big passing tracks, a 207-car siding running north from the yard office up through the plant complex.

The T&OC ran through what many would deem boring country, past towns and farms, barns and silos, country grain elevators and through a few smaller cities. This was exactly the imagery evoked in the Arlo Guthrie ballad "City of New Orleans" on the radio in the summer of 1969:

On a long southbound odyssey, the train pulls out of Kankakee,
and rolls along past houses, farms and fields
passing trains that have no name, freight yards full of old black men,
and graveyards of the rusted automobile."

But this American heartland had its beauty any time of year, in the spring, deep summer with its muted colors and haze with cicadas singing, the fall with foliage turning, or especially in winter after a snow. The scenery varied remarkably by time of day. Since we worked all hours, we saw these places in the fog at first light, under the blazing sun at high noon, sunset and midnight, adding to the variety that many people never know. Even on a dreary rainy cold December afternoon, the bleak scenery had a vast appeal. It made me feel mindful of the history of these places and their people, grateful for life, excited about the future.

Our right-of-way was about 100 feet wide in most places. The roadbed was usually built up above the land for good drainage, avoiding mud that was the bane of railroad maintenance. Other than the odd stretch of welded rail, tracks are made up of 39-foot rails held together at the ends by a three-foot bar with two bolts through each rail end, secured by nuts about the size of a man's fist, cranked into place by section gangs. If the roadbed just underneath that joint was not perfect, with its crushed-rock ballast fluffed up and dry, the weight of passing trains would work the nuts loose and the joint would deflect up and down with each axle passing, and churn the underlying roadbed into a little mud hole. That would in turn rot the ties and pull the rails slightly toward the hole,

eventually starting to work loose the nuts at the opposite ends of those rails, spreading the problem. Good maintenance would nip this in the bud, but by 1969 the financially-stressed Penn Central Railroad, successor to the NYC, was starting to cut back.

The fence lines along the right-of-way were often grown over by vines and brambles, making them look like hedgerows. Soybeans, high rows of corn or grazing cows stood on the other side. Sometimes a couple ears of ripe field corn, borrowed from the farmer while we were bored stiff sitting in a siding waiting for a train to arrive and pass, could be roasted up nicely in the husks on the exhaust manifold of an F9 covered wagon. Add a can of baked beans, cooked similarly, and maybe a can of Vienna sausage and a cup of coffee from your thermos, and you had some five-star T&OC cuisine to reinvigorate spirits beaten down over a long night by the NT-7 experience.

Moving north from Columbus past Scottslawn, the line ran up into Marysville. Just south of town the T&OC crossed the stub of a long-abandoned 90-pound rail Big Four line that once ran from Delaware to Springfield. The remaining stub extended west of the T&OC main for a couple miles past the old Scott's plant to a big Nestlé plant in downtown Marysville. Past the former Big Four crossing, the T&OC main line then curved west across Main Street, then swung back to the north on the far edge of the city, past an old forlorn Erie line we crossed at Peoria (MP 98), and on north toward Ridgeway. Just north of the Erie diamond at Peoria, veering off to the west, was the vestigial roadbed of the original St. Marys Branch, built by the T&OC in 1897. The section between Peoria and Bellefontaine was abandoned in two stages in 1932-37, leaving the remaining 39 miles of the branch to Wapakoneta and St. Marys an “orphan” line still manned by T&OC crews dispatched from West Columbus until its demise later on in the 1970s. Along here we often stopped NT-7 to switch out country elevators mentioned above at Raymonds, West Mansfield and Horton, always good for a covered hopper or two in those days when railroads still craved traffic like that.

Next came Ridgeway, mentioned previously, where we usually dropped a block of cars. Ridgeway Tower was a classic NYC two-story wooden structure, with vertical board-and-batten wooden barn siding on its first floor, fishscale shingles on its second surrounding the line of ample windows that ran its entire operator room perimeter, topped by an inverted hip-jointed pagoda-style roof with generous overhanging eaves. Painted off-white with light gray on the shingles, the little tower was a sturdy nerve center for its miles-wide interlocking plant. The double-track Big Four main line that the T&OC crossed at the base of the tower had its siding to the east and a sweeping long interchange track with the T&OC in the northwest quadrant, with a crossover at the west end of that. North of the tower, the aforementioned interchange track led into the south end of the T&OC's 211-car Ridgeway Siding, with a pair of crossovers between that and the T&OC single-track main. There was a further switching or “storage” track to the west of Ridgeway Siding, accessed through a switch on the interchange track at the south end and another on its north end about 60 car lengths north of the crossovers. A massive steel signal bridge, I think the only one on the T&OC, straddled

the main just north of the crossovers, providing the home signal for Ridgeway on the main and controlling the interchange track used by the higher-speed Big Four trains rolling on or off the T&OC. These tended to be fast “time freight” and trailer on flatcar "pretty boy" trains that always had right of way.

Past Ridgeway we crossed the Erie’s double-track Chicago main line at MP 73, adjacent to a big elevator, from which point the T&OC track curved west into downtown Kenton (MP 72) past the old brick Kenton yard office and tiny yard there, running along the headwaters of the Scioto River, under a stub of the old single-track Big Four Bellefontaine-Clyde line. This track ran northeast to Berwick where it interchanged via a wide wye onto the old T&OC Eastern Branch to the south end of Stanley Yard in Toledo. The Western had an interchange track that climbed and twisted sharply uphill to this Big Four branch in the northeast quadrant of the T&OC-Big Four flyover, but this was suitable only for yard moves and southbound trains heading down off the Big Four to Columbus and Bellefontaine. After passing beneath the flyover, the Western curved up a hill back toward due north.

Kenton had quite a lot of railroad and a number of active shippers within its city limits. Most of this was accessible only off the Big Four, but it was switched by a T&OC yard crew based at the yard office on the Western main line.

From Kenton north, the railroad was straight as a string for close to 50 miles, with only a few short jogs, up past Dunkirk Siding and the little brick castle-like Dunkirk Tower (MP 61) and its 176-car passing track and crossing of the Pennsylvania Railroad's double-track Pittsburgh-Chicago main line. Beyond Dunkirk, the line ran straight through Williamstown (MP 58), with its elevator and overhead US Route 30 bridge. Just to the east of the track south of that bridge was a dead, bare wild cherry tree trunk with a lone branch stub sticking out near the top at a perfect 45-degree angle, which I mistook for a railroad semaphore "slow approach" signal on my student trip, embarrassing myself with the engineer.

Next came Arlington (MP 53) with another small old wooden elevator on the west side of the track, and then up past the town ball fields was the Akron, Canton & Youngstown Railroad diamond, with an interchange track in the southeast quadrant with south facing switch points onto the T&OC. We dropped cuts of hoppers in here from our southbound favorite train, TC-2. It was protected by a manual "derail," a casting that would guide train wheels up over the rail. You had to unlock and throw it with a switch handle before taking engines and cars in. Unique on the T&OC, it was painted bright yellow, hard to miss, but of course some sleep-deprived crew overlooked it on a dark night once and we put the hoppers down in the gully beside the cornfield.

Hancock Siding (MP 48) was another big welded-rail 176-car passing track. Hancock and Dunkirk were the most frequently used sidings for meets between T&OC northbounds and souhtbounds.

North of Hancock we came into Findlay, the biggest city on the line. Downtown Findlay (MP 44) featured a gigantic old gray NYC freight house and small four-track yard opposite, with the Blanchard River meandering through, showing several abandoned railroad bridge abutments, suggesting other lines must have crossed the T&OC here in decades past. That was in fact the case, as long-abandoned tracks of the Big Four from Carey and Vanlue to the East, the long-disappeared Lake Erie & Western, the Cincinnati, Hamilton & Dayton Railway, and the Mad River & Lake Erie Railroad all converged here, crossing the T&OC at various points within city limits. Just north of Sandusky Street downtown there was a wye off to the west leading into what looked like an old small yard. Here sat the small SW7 switch engine used by the Findlay Yard Crew. On the north side of town, just past a bridge over the river, the line crossed the N&W at North Findlay (MP 41) and ran past a line of vine-overgrown idled nail factories and light manufacturing plants, the only real "rust belt" section of the T&OC north of Columbus.

Beyond this and west of the track lay Dow Chemical and the big Whirlpool Plant, which produced “white goods” (appliances), sitting to the west of our tracks at MP 39, with a mile-long switching lead that gave access to this site from the Norfolk & Western (former Nickel Plate, or New York, Chicago and St. Louis RR) double track line that crossed us at close to a right angle at Mortimer (MP 38). Whirlpool was good for 4,500 loads annually in the late 1960s. The T&OC shared switching rights with the N&W. We accessed this factory through a north-facing switch just opposite the complex. The Findlay Yard Crew did most of this work, but not to miss the fun, NT-7 or southbound TC-2 could be sent in to switch it out on occasion along their exhausting routes.

On from Mortimer was Van Buren and the 154-car Galatea Siding, the south switch of which was at MP 34, and to the north of which was the double track B&O main line to Chicago (MP 32). Next was the town of Cygnet (MP 30), a fastidiously clean village with a well-maintained grid of north-south-east-west streets that could have been in a magazine ad for Ohio small-town lifestyle. North of this was Trombley, a little alfalfa mill with south-facing switch points, beyond which lay Portage (MP 24) and a couple deep blue bottomless quarry ponds, looking inviting for a dip on hot August days. (But Ohio parents religiously taught kids not to swim in quarries!)

The line then came into Bowling Green (MP 20.7), a big college town dominated on both sides of our tracks by Heinz canning plants and several companies’ industries that processed the enormous summer crops of tomatoes and cucumbers that grew in this region. Heinz ketchup continues to be a favorite, and I love any kind of pickle, but I can assure you do not want to know details about how pickles are made or you may never eat another. The T&OC had an 80-car siding through Bowling Green but it was almost useless except for switching as it was crossed very few hundred feet by a city street we were forbidden from blocking. There was an aroma of take-out hamburgers smothered in fried onions from a drive-thru right at the main crossing, but we were always rolling here, no time to stop for some.

Just north of Bowling Green, the track curved, for the first time since Kenton, sweeping about 15 degrees to the east onto its final alignment, a bee-line to Stanley Tower 19 miles ahead. Next came the 150-car Dunbridge siding (south end at MP 16), town of Dowling (MP 13), Sugar Ridge and B&R Mill (MP 7), Oregon Road (where many trains ended their trip, swapping with a yard crew arriving by van) and the south switch into the big Willis Day Industrial Park just beneath the Interstate overpass at MP 6.5. Here the T&OC exited the NYC Columbus Division and entered the Toledo Division. Then came Stanley Tower (MP 4.6) where the T&OC passed in a long curve veering off to the east and then south, directly into the heart of Stanley Yard.

Arriving in Toledo

The main delay on the unit trains, and with many northbound freights, was getting into the yard at Stanley or through the congested junction of the Western, Eastern Branch and Toledo Terminal Railroad at Stanley Tower. If a Stanley Yard track was not ready for the inbound freight train, or a crew was not ready to take the unit train north from Stanley Tower up to Toledo Lakefront Docks or on to the utility plant in Michigan, the train would be held at Dunbridge Siding (MP-13) or more likely at Oregon Road (MP-7), sometimes for several hours (or until the crew “violated” and had to be picked up by van). Through unit trains usually changed crew at Oregon Road, while Stanley-bound freights would pull past the tower and turn south down into one of the yards.

Stanley Yard, at the Western's north terminus and interconnection with the Toledo Terminal Railway at Stanley Tower, was a far bigger operation than West Columbus. This yard had a north-south alignment bisecting the Toledo Terminal RR along the T&OC (NYC) Eastern Branch, with the Western coming into its north end curving around from the southwest. Stanley offered two receiving yards (Yard "E" to the north of Stanley Tower and the TTRR and "S" around a curve to the south) and one outbound (Yard "O" and the southernmost end), a classification yard ("K," in between S and O) and a hump between Yards O, S and K. Stanley Yard served traffic on the Western, NYC New York-Chicago main line, and Detroit branches.

Crews arriving from Columbus, and those assigned to the Willis Day Industrial Park (WIP) switching jobs, as well as NYC crews from Detroit and off the NYC’s east-west New York-Chicago main line, stayed at a two-story yellow block railroad YMCA residence dormitory just east of the three-story brick Stanley yard office. After “marking off” duty at the yard office, we reached the “Y” by means of a viaduct under the Yard K hump track. The YMCA featured microscopic 6x10 roomettes with a bath and shower room at the end of each hall, a lounge where crews played cards (hearts or pinochle, sometimes very low-stakes poker and a similar game called "tonk"); the betting was fun and not high enough to get anyone angry if they lost. The “Y” offered a short-order restaurant with the tastiest (i.e. high fat) hamburgers and French fries one could imagine.

Breakfasts here were hearty, with sides of French toast and flapjacks. The black coffee, brewed in big ten-gallon reservoirs, was as strong as it got in the Buckeye State.

Here T&OC crews reposed, getting their statutorily-required eight hours rest, waiting for the call to man a southbound train home.

[*Written from notes and memory from 45 years ago - comments, corrections and additions most welcome*.]

Photo Links:

Ridgeway Tower:
http://www.panoramio.com/photo/66711757?source=wapi&referrer=kh.google.com

Dunkirk Tower:
http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~ohfahs/-dunkirk.images/Dunkirk_Train_Tower.jpg

Findlay Passenger Station, Operator's Office and Freight House:
http://www.west2k.com/ohpix/findlaytandoc.jpg

Stanley Tower:
http://www.michiganrailroads.com/RRHX/Stations/CountyStations/WoodOHStations/StanleyTowerOH.htm

Genealogy of the T&OC - Western Branch, Columbus to Toledo, and Eastern Branch from Stanley Yard to Kenton.

Whitmore (Stanley Tower) to North Findlay, Toledo and Indianapolis Railway Co., 1882-3. 40.7 miles

North Findlay to Findlay, Toledo Columbus and Cincinnati Railway Co., 1885, 0.7 miles

Findlay to Curtellis (just south of Hancock siding), Toledo Columbus and Cincinnati Railway Co., 1888, 5.0 miles

Curtellis to Kenton, Toledo Columbus and Cincinnati Railway Co., 1888, 23.2 miles

Kenton to Ridgeway, Toledo Columbus and Cincinnati Railway Co., 1890-92, 9.1 miles

Ridgeway to West Columbus T&OC, 1892-3, 49.6 miles

Eastern Branch - Toledo to Heath, Atlantic and Lake Erie RR Co and Ohio Central RR Co 1869-76, 132.7 mile