



RAILWAYS OF DARKE COUNTY

This information courtesy of Joe Armstrong

From a material standpoint three things have probably contributed more toward the making of Darke county than all other forces and institutions combined, viz.: drainage, roads and railways. We have previously noted the remarkable results accomplished by drainage operations and road building and will consider briefly the effects of railway buildings. The first means of transportation of supplies of food from the older settlements to Darke county was by means of pack horses over the military trails cut by St. Clair and Wayne. The difficulties and dangers encountered by these pack trains were typified in the sending back of a whole regiment by St. Clair to guard a train of supplies advancing from Fort Washington, October, 1791, and in the vicious attack on Lieutenant Lowery and his men while bringing supplies to Wayne's new camp at Greenville in October, 1793.

It was slow, tedious and hazardous process in those early days but the most efficient known. After the trails had been widened and improved, heavy wagons were used. No doubt many of the early settlers came into the county from distant points in large conestoga wagons drawn by from four to six horses whose combined strength was often necessary to pull cumbersome vehicles over the rough corduroy stretches and through the swampy places. As the roads were improved lighter vehicles were employed. The National road was finished from Cumberland Gap to the Ohio river in 1825 and to the Indiana line in 1830, thus furnishing a valuable outlet for the produce raised within its reach. The Erie canal was opened in 1825 and as a consequence grain soon increased fifty percent in price. The first railway in Ohio was finished in 1838 and it is interesting to note that the first railway reached Darke county thirteen years later. The significance of this event, its far-reaching influence and the enthusiasm aroused can scarcely be conceived in these days of many railways. To give an adequate account of the building of this road we herewith quote from Beer's History of Darke county published in 1880:

"The pioneer road of this county was known as the Dayton and Union Railroad. The company was chartered February 26, 1846, as the 'Greenville and Miami Railroad Company.' for the construction of a railroad from the town of Greenville to any point on the Dayton & Western Railroad, or any point on the Miami or Miami Extension Canal, which the directors might determine. The incorporators were Daniel R. Davis, Hiram Bell., William M. Wilson, Rufus Kilpatrick, John Colville, George Ward, John McClure, Jr., John C. Potter, Erastus Putnam, Alfred Kitchen, James Hanaway, Henry Arnold, W. B. Beall, I. N. Gard, Abraham Scribner, Russell Evans, John C. Shepherd, Adam Baker, Abraham Studabaker, Charles Hutchins, Joseph Ford and Solomon riffle, of Darke county; General H. Bell was the first president; Henry Arnold, Esq., first treasurer, and Hon. William M. Wilson, the first secretary.

The capital stock of the company was \$200,000. divided into shares of \$50 each. At the expiration of a year, Dr. I. N. Gard was elected president, succeeded by David Studabaker. During 1848, the enterprise was first fully presented to the people of the county for their support. Among the most active in forwarding the undertaking not only to obtain a favorable vote, but to secure means to do the necessary preliminary work, were Dr. Gard, Judge Wilson, General Bell, Mr. Studabaker, Mr.



Kitchen and Major Davis. There was then but little money in the county; the largest subscriptions that could be obtained were \$500, and there were but eight or ten of these.

On January 5, 1848, an act was passed by the legislature, authorizing the commissioners of Darke county to purchase stock in the G. & M. R. R. Co., to any amount not to exceed \$50,000, provided a majority of the voters of the county were in favor thereof. On the first Monday of April, the proposition to aid was carried by a majority of 637 votes, and on the 13th, the commissioners subscribed the maximum amount in aid of the road. August 21, the auditor was authorized to issue an order on the treasurer for \$110.00, to pay for the survey of the road. February 2, 1849, the town council of Greenville was in like manner empowered to subscribe thereto any amount not exceeding \$10,000. Judge Wilson continued secretary of the company from organization to about 1850, that is, during the preliminary work of the company. In 1850, a new organization was effected, with E. B. Taylor as president, and an act was passed authorizing the county and town to sell any or all stock to said company, or any other formed to extend the railroad from Greenville to the State line. Mr. Taylor went to New York, negotiated a loan of \$150,000, bought iron and other necessities to equipment. In July, 1850, the first locomotive intended to be used for laying the track of the road from Dayton to Greenville, arrived at Dayton; it was brought from the establishment of Swinburn, Smith & Co., of Paterson, New Jersey, and weighed fourteen tons.

The first installment of iron was shipped from New York for Dayton on the 26th of June. The residue of the iron was then on the way from Liverpool to New York. It was of the T pattern, and weighed about nineteen pounds to the square foot. The bridge across the Miami river at Dayton was completed and intended for use by three roads, the others being the Cincinnati, Hamilton & Dayton and the Dayton & Western. The contract for laying the track was let to A. DeGraff. The depot and other buildings were placed under contract, and all the work systematically pushed forward. Two additional locomotives weighing eighteen tons each, were contracted for delivery, one in August, the other in October. Two passenger cars were constructed at Dayton, in the establishment of Thresher, Packard & Co. The "burthen" cars were manufactured at the Greenville foundry and machine shops of Messrs. Edmonds & Evans, and Taylor Brothers. The grain crop of 1851 was unprecedentedly large, and the road was expected to highly benefit all interests, whether farming, mechanical, mercantile or commercial. It was stated at the time that this event "was an important epoch in Darke county history," and such it has proved to have been. It enhanced values and facilitated communication. It was noted that "the running time between Greenville and Dayton will be less than one hour and a half, and the distance may be performed with perfect safety in less than a hour."

On February 19, 1851, DeGraff started out from Dayton with a train to be used for track laying. The train was platform cars with houses built on them—three for sleeping rooms, one for dining room and one for a kitchen. The job of laying the iron was in charge of John Horrien. On May 25th, the main track of the road was finished to the depot buildings, and a meeting was called to arrange for a celebration of the event. The event duly honored, was marked by a large crowd, and made memorable by an emeute at Greenville on part of the roughs. The board of directors, at a meeting



held at Dayton, August 30, 1853, declared a ten per cent dividend from the earnings of the road, from January 1st to September 1st. This dividend was declared after deducting the expenses, and there remained a reserve fund of \$5,000. The receipts for August were for passengers \$6,261; transportation, \$4,215; mail, \$333; total, nearly \$11,000. The cost of the road was about \$550,000. Outstanding bonds, \$341,000 and the liberal dividend to stockholders created an enthusiasm which greatly facilitated the induction and completion of the road to Union, and of other roads constructed through the county. Mr. Taylor continued to be president of the road until July, 1855, when he resigned. Meantime, the company had been authorized by the legislature to extend the railroad to the Indiana state line, by such a route as the directors might select, within the county of Darke, "and the act had been accepted by resolution of the board of directors as an amendment to the charter of the company. The road was built through to Union City three years after its completion to Greenville, that is, in 1853. When President Taylor resigned, the road went into the hands of the bondholders, by whom it was operated. At length, suit was brought for foreclosure of mortgage August, 1861, but a plan of reorganization and capitalization of stock, and debt was agreed upon, and the road was sold October 30, 1862, to H. C. Stimson and S. T. Tilden for \$1000, subject to the mortgage of \$150,000. In 1855, Judge Wilson, secretary, resigned, and the chief office was removed to Dayton. All control of the road passed from the citizens of the county that year."

The opening of the G. & M. railway was the occasion of much rejoicing in the county seat which was manifested in various ways. The social leader got up a dance for which the following invitation was issued:

"RAILROAD SOIREE."

The company of yourself and lady is solicited to attend a cotillion party to be given at Greenville, on Friday evening, June 11, 1852, in honor of the opening of the Greenville and Miami Railroad.

Managers

Greenville - E. B. Taylor, W. H. Daily, R. A. Knox, J. B. Grover, J. D. Farrer, O. A. Lyman, J. G. Rees, T. K. Potter, J. R. Knox, W. R. Weston, D. Laurimore, W. C. Porterfield.

Dayton - D. Z. Peirce, R. D. Harshman, C. B. Herrman, D. Beckel, J. S. Weston, J. O. Conklin, D. E. Mead, E. A. Parrott.

Greenville, June 8, 1852.

"In the summer of 1854, the road was completed from Dodson to Dayton, and the company continued to operate the entire line from Dayton to Union City until April, 1863, when, in accordance with an agreement on January 19th, previously, the joint use of the track of the Dayton & Western Railroad Company, from Dayton to Dodson (fifteen miles), was secured, between which points each company had a line of road running nearly parallel. By this agreement, the company was enabled to take up and dispose of the iron between Dayton and Dodson. January 19, 1863, the company was reorganized, under the name of the Dayton & Union Railroad Company. When the road was opened



for business in 1850, land along its line might have been bought for \$5.00 per acre; it has since been sold for \$100 per acre. The country was wet, and water stood in the woods and clearing along the track for months at a time. This is now drained, arable and valuable. Then, about Arcanum, houses were to be seen at long intervals; now fine farm houses dot the landscape in all directions. Arrangements are now in progress to relay the old track, and annul the agreement for the joint use of the Dayton & Western Rails."

Since the above was written, land has been sold as high as \$300 per acre. At first but a single train, which carried both passengers and freight, was run during the day time; now four passenger trains and one freight are run through each way daily.

Mr. Dwight Irwin has been the efficient and accommodating agent at Greenville since 1898. The county records in 1912 show a total mileage of over twenty-six miles of main track and over three miles of siding in the county, with property listed for taxation at the county treasurer's office in 1912, at \$491,830.00. The stations on this line are Gordon, Arcanum, Delisle, Jaysville, Greenville, Coletown, Hillgrove and Union City.

The C. C. C. & St. L., or "Big Four" Railway

The beginning of the Greenville and Miami railway inspired another enterprise and in 1848 the charter of the Bellfontaine and Indianapolis railway was granted by the legislatures of Ohio and Indiana. Mr. William M. Wilson then represented Darke county in the Ohio senate. The charter drafted for the proposed new road provided that certain places, as Sidney and Greenville, should be on the road "provided" they were "practicable" points. It seems Mr. Wilson's vote was secured for the charter with the definite understanding that the road would be constructed through Piqua and Greenville, his home town. The words "if practicable" proved to be a "sleeper" and the road was constructed on a "bee line" through Sidney and Versailles, leaving Piqua and Greenville several miles to the south. It is said that much laboring and lobbying was done on account of this road and Mr. George Ward, who represented both Darke and Shelby counties in the legislature, is credited with being largely instrumental in causing the more northern route to be adopted. Work on this road was soon commenced in Darke county, probably as early as the fall of 1848 or the spring of 1849, making it the first line started within this territory. The road was not completed until 1852 or 1853, however.

This road crosses the county line about the center of the eastern boundary of Wayne township, runs directly to Versailles and then continues in almost a straight line, in a direction slightly south of west to Union City, having as intermediate stations Dawn, Ansonia, Elroy. It was completed in the early fifties and has proven of immense value in developing Wayne, northern Richland, Brown and Jackson townships by providing a ready market for the large quantities of grain, timber and manufactured timber products. This road is also an integral part of one of the great railway systems of Ohio, Indiana and Illinois, forming a remarkable chain of connection between the commercial centers of these states. It has about twenty miles of finely graded main track within the county, listed for taxation in 1912 at \$1,204,770.00. It does a large freight business and is known for the well appointed and fast through passenger and mail trains which it runs.



The construction of this important trunk line to the north of the county seat aroused the citizens of Greenville to extend the Greenville and Miami road to an intersecting point on the state line-thus giving Greenville another outlet for travel and traffic and laying the foundation for Union City, which has since developed into an important manufacturing and railway center.

The Pennsylvania Railroad

The P. C. C. & St. Louis railway now operates two lines which radiate from Bradford, the division point-the Logansport division extending in a straight line to Union City, a distance of about twenty and one-half miles, and the Indianapolis division, extending to Greenville and thence southwesterly toward Richmond, a distance of about twenty-six and one-third miles. The Logansport division passes through Adams, northern Greenville and Jackson townships in a direction somewhat north of west, with intermediate stations at Horatio, Stelvideo, Pikeville and Woodington. A second track has recently been finished on the right of way, the grading improved, several overhead crossings constructed, and vast improvements made making this probably the most improved and valuable stretch of railway in the county. As it connects New York, Philadelphia and Pittsburgh with Chicago an immense amount of business is transacted. Work on this division in Darke county was begun in 1852 and continued about two years, when financial embarrassment overtook the enterprise. Work was resumed in 1858 and regular trains were running from Columbus to Union City by the last of April, 1859. The road at that time was known as the Columbus, Piqua and Indiana Railroad and was incorporated at \$2,000,000 by Wm. Wilson and John C. Potter of Darke county, with others from Miami, Champaign, Madison and Franklin counties.

The Indianapolis division of this road was built through Darke county during the years 1862 and 1863. It was organized in 1861 as the Richmond and Covington Railroad Company for the purpose of connecting the first division at Bradford with the Indiana Central Railroad at Richmond, Ind. Evan Baker, of Greenville, was president of the road at this time, and A. Price was the contractor. On account of the hills of gravel and excellent ballasting material along the right-of-way the cost of construction was reasonable, and the estimate for completing the road was seven thousand dollars per mile. Darke county was asked to subscribe \$25,000.00 or about one-fourth of the amount needed to put the road through. E. Baker, the Careys, P. Pomeroy and Thos. Waring were largely instrumental in pushing the work to completion. Though lease, purchase, manipulation and reorganization both of these divisions finally became an integral part of the great Pennsylvania Railway Co., which is one of the greatest and most efficient railway systems in the world, connecting the seaboard at New York with St. Louis and Chicago, the gateways to the west and northwest. The value of the road to Greenville and Darke county is almost inestimable. The amount of business transacted by this road at Greenville alone is estimated at about \$140,000.00 yearly. Eighteen heavy passenger and mail trains and sixteen scheduled freight trains pass this point daily. This division passes through Adams, southern Greenville, Neave, northwestern Butler and Harrison townships and has intermediate stations at Gettysburg, Greenville, Weaver's New Madison and Wiley's. The total main trackage of these two divisions in Darke county is over sixty-seven miles in length. The total value for taxation in 1912, as listed in the county treasurer's office was \$3,873,450.00.



W. J. McCurdy has been the efficient agent of this company at Greenville since 1889.

The Cincinnati Northern Railway.

The main north and south railway operating in the county is the Cincinnati Northern, which crosses the northern boundary at Burkettsville, passes almost directly south through Allen, Brown and northern Greenville townships to the county seat, and then continues down the Mud creek prairie through Neave township and across the Maple swamp district of Butler township, leaving the county about one mile below Castine. The intermediate stations from the north downward are New Weston, Rossburg, Ansonia, Meeker, Greenville, Ft Jefferson, Savona and Castine. This road has about thirty-one and a third miles of main track and over seven miles of siding in the county, and was valued for taxation in 1912 at \$751,570.00. It has a unique history, illustrating in a striking manner the difficulties encountered in early railway construction. The construction of this line was first agitated in 1853, it then being the object to extend it from the straits of Mackinac to Cincinnati. Large and enthusiastic meetings were held in Van Wert, Greenville and other points in that year, and local organizations effected. Survey commenced in August and Moses Hart took stock subscriptions at his store in Greenville. By October 19, \$200,000.00 had been subscribed. The estimated cost was less than \$17,500 per mile and the distance from Greenville to the northern line of the state was one hundred and eleven miles on the route proposed.

From various causes the construction of the line was delayed, but the directors did not abandon hope of final success. Changes were proposed in the route between Celina and Greenville, a distance of thirty-two miles, and bids were received on this section at Greenville in 1858. On June 2, 1858, fifteen miles of road were placed under contract together with the trestle and culvert work of the entire distance between Celina and Greenville. The remaining seventeen miles were resurveyed with a view to alteration. After a large part of the grading had been done the enterprise was abandoned on account of the failure to dispose of bonds in the European market. The Civil War ensued with the financial depression which followed reconstruction and revival of industry and the enterprise lay dormant until about 1880. Agitation was again revived and the road was built through Greenville in 1883 after much difficulty. J. L. Winner, J. W. Frizzel and Moses Hart took active part in the original enterprise and John Devor and L. L. Bell in the last. The road was finally completed from Jackson, Mich., to Germantown, with connections to Cincinnati, under the name of Cincinnati Northern Railway, and has lately become an important part of the New York Central lines. Mr. Joe. Hildebrand is the enterprising agent at Greenville and reports an annual business of about \$125,000.00 at this station. On account of the road's direction and the rich territory which it travels it is destined to become an increasingly important line.

The Peoria & Eastern Railway

The Peoria & Eastern division of the Big Four, formerly known as the I. B. & W. Railway, extends through southern part of the county in an east and west direction. It crosses the eastern county line in the northern part of Monroe township and runs directly west through Monroe and Twin to the Greenville and New Madison pike in northwestern Butler township, then zigzags about in the northwesterly direction through northern Harrison and southern German townships reaching the



state line near the southwest corner of the latter township. The stations along this line are Pittsburgh, Arcanum, Savona, Clarks's Station and Glen Karn, It was built in -- and affords an outlet to the southern part of the county similar to that provided by the other division of the "Big Four" in the northern part. It has over twenty-two miles of main track and about four and a third miles of siding in the county, and was listed for taxation in 1912 at \$655,880.00.

C. H. & D. Railway

The railway having the smallest mileage in the county is a branch of the Cincinnati, Hamilton & Dayton system, formerly know as the "Narrow Gauge." It crosses the northern line of the county near the northwestern corner of Patterson township, runs almost due south through Patterson and Wayne townships to Versailles, and then curves in a southeasterly direction and crosses the eastern line of the county near the southwestern corner of Wayne township. The stations along this line are Osgood, Yorkshire and Versailles. It has a main trackage of twelve and one-fifth miles and about a mile and a half of sidings in the county. It was constructed about 1881.

Ohio Electric Railway.

The practical application of electricity to the purposes of transportation developed about 1890. The next ten years witnessed a rapid improvement in knowledge, and methods of electrical control. By 1900 nearly every large city in the United States had displaced the old horse cars by electrically driven cars and electrical traction lines were being projected form these centers to the surrounding towns, especially in the eastern section of the country. Dayton was one of the most enterprising of the Ohio cities in this respect and soon had about ten lines projected, with the object of increasing local business. Among these, was one to Greenville and Union City. This fostered and vigorously pushed to completion by Dr. J. E. Lowes of Dayton. It was completed to Greenville in 1901 and to Union City in 1904, and has proven a great boon to travelers, especially on account of the many rural stops, and hourly car service. It was also instrument in quickening the service on the D. & U. Railway, which it practically parallels. It has about thirty-one miles of main track and about one mile of siding in the county, when it was listed for taxation in 1912, at \$639,820.00. Thus it will be seen that Darke county has seven railways and one traction line crossing it in various directions with a total mileage of about two hundred and ten miles, exclusive of sidings, and a total valuation for taxation of about \$8,000,000.00

It will be further noted that these railways enter every township of the twenty composing the county, except Mississinawa, Wabash, York and Franklin; that the county seat is crossed by three steam lines and one electric, and that each one of the larger towns in the county has at least two lines.