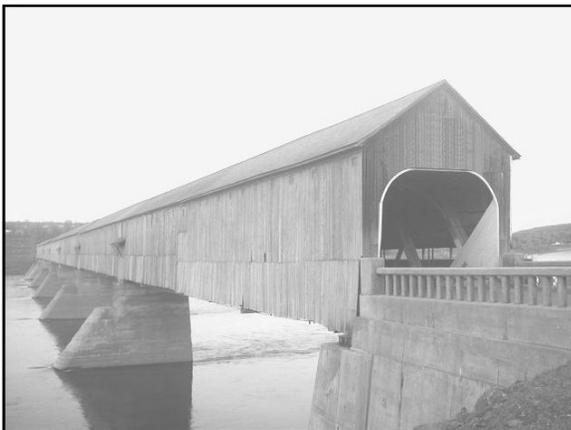


Today we complain that they are noisy, dirty and dangerous, but 150 years ago people went out of their way to have a railroad come through their town. A town just couldn't expect to succeed and grow without one.

The steam locomotive had become America's growth stimulant. Canals, which in this part of the country offered snail-pace transportation and were uselessly frozen over in the winter, had passed their brief heyday by the late 1840s.

Railroad building was busting out all over America and within a short period of time Toledo, with its excellent outlet to the Great Lakes, was to have railroads approaching from all directions. The challenge for our village was to get one of them routed through here.



Probable appearance of the Junction Railroad Bridge near Fort Meigs

In 1850 a delegation attended a meeting in Norwalk, Ohio to plead for consideration of Perrysburg as the site of the river crossing for a new railroad

to be built coming this way from Cleveland. Former Mayor John C. Spink, speaking for the delegation, stated that his group did not think it possible to ever construct or keep up a deepwater drawbridge then being considered downriver toward Toledo. He humorously cited the backing of the high authorities: the U. S. Supreme Court, and God Almighty "who gave us a navigable river, except he put the bottom in a little too high in some places."

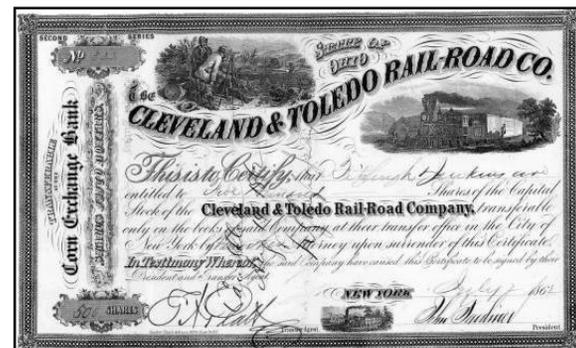
The citizens of Perrysburg and Maumee were even willing to tax themselves to buy stock ownership in the railroad, but it is not known if they actually did. However, in 1851 the people of the area were informed that they had secured the permanent location of the Junction Railroad through Perrysburg and Maumee and on into Toledo. Railroad stock sales had raised \$120,000 from the citizens of our town and adjoining townships.

The new railroad, organized a year earlier, was to be constructed from Cleveland through Elyria, Sandusky, Port Clinton, Perrysburg, and then across the river to Maumee and on to Swanton where it linked up with a branch of the Michigan Southern and Northern Indiana Road. Completion was promised for 1853.

The line was to run through Perrysburg along Third Street, as it does now, but continuing west at Cherry Street and passing just to the north of what is now Fort Meigs Union Cemetery. A new railroad bridge was to be built

across the rapids just upstream from where the present vehicular bridge now stands.

The Junction Railroad was chartered March 2, 1846 and its successor, the Cleveland and Toledo Railroad



A Junction Railroad Stock Certificate

Company constructed the first rail crossing of the river at the Foot of the Rapids on March 6, 1854, after receiving a right-of-way grant from Maumee City Council.

Work on the railroad began, coming west, in 1852 and a local man, Shibnah Beach, had the contract to lay eight miles of track in this area. But sometime during this year, the Junction Railroad merged with the Cleveland, Norwalk and Toledo line and work apparently slowed down or stopped.

Three long years went by before the Perrysburg Journal reported that the stone piers and abutments for the new bridge were finally finished and trestle work underway. The construction at this time was under the supervision of George W. Reynolds, of Maumee City, and he relates his experience in a letter

written in 1902 at 92 years of age [excerpt from *Maumee Advance Era* of June 28,1929]:

"In 1845 the Junction Railroad was incorporated from Cleveland, via Sandusky, Port Clinton, Perrysburg, Maumee City, Wauseon, Fort Wayne and ultimately to Chicago, which, beyond my expectations, was growing into quite a village. Judge Lane of Sandusky City was chosen president of Junction Railroad and I was made a managing director for [the] West Division.....I put under contract, from twelve miles east of Perrysburg to Swanton, all grading, bridges and culverts, including [the] Maumee River Bridge, 50 feet high, 777 feet long, to [the] Maumee bank; put the bridge over the river ready for ties, and raised money for and paid for all out of bonds issued."

Sometime later, probably in 1858, the "Iron Horse" finally puffed into Perrysburg without much fanfare. People were probably so tired of waiting for it that they didn't feel like celebrating. In 1867 the line went out of business and the bridge across the river was removed from its piers. In 1906, the Toledo, Bowling Green & Southern Interurban Line built a bridge on the same line of piers as the 1854 railroad bridge. These are the old piers you see today in the river.

Backing up a little to 1852, Perrysburg got all excited about the proposed laying of a north-south line between Cincinnati and Detroit, organized as the Dayton and Michigan Road.

Plans called for it to cross the river on the Junction Railroad Bridge, and the excited village bought \$50,000 worth of stock and the township \$10,000 worth. In time this was to become a hefty tax burden for the people. But this rail line was also a long time coming. Four years went by and rumors were that Perrysburg might be by-passed. However, by the end of May track laying was completed from Toledo to Perrysburg, and by August of 1859 construction crews from both north and south met 50 miles south of here and the last spike was driven.

As the years went by, the original railroad went out of business and in 1861 the D & M built a two-story depot here and in 1879, a large frame engine house. Still later we had double tracks through here and passenger and freight trains ran at all hours. We especially needed trains then to carry passengers and mail, for this was before the days of trucks and automobiles.

We paid a high price, however, for over the years before we had gates and warning lights at crossings here in town and in the township, a large number of people were killed by trains.

Things You Should Know About Perrysburg, Ohio

Copyright 2006 / 2008

By

HISTORIC PERRYSBURG, INC.

www.historicperrysburg.org

THE FIRST RAILROAD An Iron Horse Story



An 1860s vintage steam locomotive

Things You Should Know About Perrysburg, Ohio

One of a Series Presented By
HISTORIC PERRYSBURG, INC.

