

# TIDBITS ABOUT NARROW GAUGE RAILROADING IN OHIO

*Long ago and close to home*

- I. Gauges were a mish-mosh in Ohio in the 1870s.
  - A. Standard gauge (4' 8½") was beginning to prevail,
  - B. A few railroads still used Ohio gauge (4' 10")
  - C. There was even a 6' gauge line.
- II. Entrepreneurs began a campaign from Cincinnati to publicize the economies of narrow gauge railroads in construction, rolling stock and operations.
- III. As a consequence, in the 1870s and 1880s, 3' gauge grew rapidly, especially in Ohio.
- IV. Like all railroads, the narrow gauge lines merged, changed names, and broke up. Today, think NYC⇒PC⇒CR⇒NS. It just happened more often back then.
- V. A total of 1175 miles of narrow gauge main line was built in the state,
  - A. Many roads converted to standard gauge early.
  - B. The most operational main line at one time was 960 miles in 1884.
- VI. Eventually, nearly all converted to standard gauge.
- VII. Only three narrow gauge railroads remained at the beginning of the twentieth century; two of these had converted by 1902.
- VIII. The last remaining narrow gauge road was the Ohio River and Western Railway.
  - A. It was the only one abandoned without converting,
  - B. It was abandoned in 1931.
  - C. It ran from Bellaire, on the Ohio River, to Zanesville.
- IX. The first narrow gauge railroad in Ohio was the Painesville & Youngstown Railroad,
  - A. It gave Youngstown access to Lake Erie at Fairport (later Fairport Harbor).
  - B. It began operation in 1872.
- X. Delphos, Ohio is said to be one of only two municipalities in the country from which you could depart in all four compass points by narrow gauge road. The other was in Colorado.
- XI. Many of the slim rail lines around Cincinnati relied on commuter traffic, including service to the Cincinnati Zoo and Coney Island.
- XII. The Ohio based Toledo, Cincinnati & St. Louis Railroad was the largest narrow gauge railroad east of the Mississippi River.
  - A. It reached the named cities (at least if East St. Louis counts).
  - B. It also served Ironton, Ohio, its easternmost point.
  - C. It totaled 782 mainline miles, of which 433 were in Ohio.
  - D. The large size was achieved by merging a number of roads.
  - E. It went into receivership and was broken up two years after the merger.
  - F. After the demise of the TC&StL, narrow gauge declined steadily in Ohio.

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