THE RAILROAD COMES TO PITTSBURGH

WILLIAM KENNETH SCHUSLER

Because of its strategic position at the headwaters of the navigable Ohio River, Pittsburgh early became a gateway to the West and the most populous English settlement in the trans-Allegheny region. The city wedded land and water transportation: many of the roads and trails from the middle eastern seaboard stretched tortuously across the Appalachians and then moved in converging patterns into the Pittsburgh district, while at the same time, the Ohio River provided a natural artery into the West and South. Practically speaking then, Pittsburgh had a predominant position on the only modes of intercommunity transport that were then available.

During the first two decades of the nineteenth century, the city became an increasingly important transportation and boat building center. Robert Fulton and Robert Livingston, after launching the Clermont on the Hudson River in 1807, established a shipyard at Pittsburgh in 1811 and built the steamboat New Orleans, the first to operate on the western rivers, which made its maiden voyage down the Ohio and Mississippi during the fall of 1811. The voyage was historic and ushered in a new era during which commerce on the Mississippi and its tributaries increased steadily and was estimated at $654,000,000 in 1852.

After the steamboat had proved itself on the Ohio, the main interest and problem of the Pittsburgh region was the improvement of transportation routes eastward over the mountains to the Atlantic Seaboard. For the most part, only rough roads or trails existed and freight rates for the journey were very high, limiting the commerce to small quantities of the highest rated traffic. The stage-

Dr. Schusler, Associate Professor and Head of the Department of Commerce of Duquesne University, based the above article on research in connection with preparation of his doctoral dissertation.—Ed.

1 Perhaps the most extensive treatment of highway development is found in the ambitious efforts of A. B. Hulbert, Historic Highways of America (16 vols.; Cleveland, A. N. Clark Co., 1902-5).


coach, the Conestoga wagon, and the pack horse were the important carriers of the day. The Forbes Road, one of the important routes through the mountains, was in effect an extension of the Philadelphia-Lancaster Turnpike. It proceeded by way of Carlisle and Bedford, but only a small portion of the whole route had a hard surface. Beyond Lancaster it was rough going and very slow. The condition of the road is described by Burgess and Kennedy who quoted an unidentified contemporaneous account to the effect that "it required a good team of five or six horses from eighteen to thirty-five days to transport from 2500 to 3500 pounds of goods from Philadelphia to Pittsburgh." 3

Because of the difficulties connected with land travel over mountainous terrain, it was only a matter of time before enterprising and imaginative men should look more avidly toward connecting water routes as the answer to inland transportation. Quite obviously, the first connecting canal to recommend itself was one that would link the Hudson River with the Great Lakes System. Despite acrimonious debate, the Erie Canal was begun with a nice sense of timing on the fourth of July, 1817. When, in 1825, Governor DeWitt Clinton was towed on a long, flat canal boat named the Seneca Chief through the harbor of New York City toward a point near Sandy Hook, a momentous moment was dramatically symbolized.

The cost and speed of a ride on the 363-mile canal was summed up in the chant, "A cent and a half a mile, and a mile and a half an hour." During the first nine years of its operation it yielded tolls of $8,500,000, substantially in excess of the seven million dollar investment made by the state of New York. Freight rates from Buffalo to New York dropped from one hundred to fifteen dollars per ton and the time of transit from twenty days to eight.4

The stunning success of the Erie Canal jolted Pennsylvanians from any complacency they might otherwise have entertained. Since the railroad was now beginning to appear on the American scene, the Pennsylvanians apparently had the choice option between the rail or the water link. After considerable debate it was decided that the untried and unproved railroad was too risky an investment even though practical considerations eventually led to a combina-

tion of both modes. By an act of the legislature in February, 1826, the so-called “Pennsylvania State Works” was authorized. They were designed to provide a connecting link between Philadelphia and the West and were opened to the public in March, 1834. As it turned out, the complete works consisted partly of railroads (one of which stood out among the greatest engineering achievements of the era) and of canals. The entire distance between Philadelphia and Pittsburgh via the Pennsylvania State Works was 394 miles.5

Compared to the Erie Canal the Pennsylvania State Works was spectacular as an engineering feat, breathtaking in view, and unfortunately expensive and cumbersome. A shipper at Pittsburgh, for example, had to move merchandise on a canal boat 104 miles, shift to the Portage Railroad, transfer it once again to a canal boat after the thirty-six mile railroad jaunt, and then back to the train.6 Winter’s ice, mismanagement by political jobholders, expensive maintenance and repair drove cost upward and by 1846 less than seven per cent of east-bound traffic came via the Pennsylvania Public Works. Of the rest, roughly half sought its market through New Orleans while the remainder enriched New York.7

In the interim, Baltimore’s interest in carving a chunk of revenue from westward traffic led to the construction of a line of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad west along the Potomac River toward Cumberland, Maryland. A further objective was an all-rail route across the mountains to the Ohio River.8 A possibly remarkable feature during this stage was that, despite transportation handicaps, Pittsburgh continued to be a thriving city. The Ohio

---

6 The line consisted of four major units. The first was the Philadelphia and Columbia Railroad which began at Vine and Broad Streets in Philadelphia and ran westward a distance of eighty-one miles to a terminating point at Columbia on the Susquehanna. At Columbia the railroad was linked to the eastern and Juniata divisions of the Pennsylvania Canal which ran 172 miles to Hollidaysburg. At Hollidaysburg the Allegheny Portage Railroad picked up the link and, rising nearly 1400 feet in ten miles by means of inclined planes, crossed the summit of the mountains, and then, by the use of inclined planes upon the western side, descended to Johnstown, a distance of 36.69 miles. The final unit was the western division of the Pennsylvania Canal which ran 104 miles from Johnstown through Pittsburgh to the Monongahela River.
8 The Baltimore and Ohio was completed to Cumberland in November, 1842.
River still provided a marvelous outlet to the west and discovery of fabulous amounts of high-grade bituminous coal in the area had transformed it into a leading industrial community. It was evident, however, that a gradual strangulation might set in if the city's need for a tie-in with eastern markets was not met. The canal system had proved inadequate for the task and the shimmering rail rather than the shimmering water seemed to be the clue to the future.

1846 was a high-water mark in the transportation history of Pennsylvania for in that year the state legislature granted a charter to the Pennsylvania Railroad for the construction of a transmountain westward route to Pittsburgh. Certainly, for a long period of time, the state's legislators had been made painfully aware of the need for vigorous and imaginative action. As early as 1818, Colonel John Stevens had memorialized the Pennsylvania Senate on the "Expediency of a Railroad from Philadelphia to Pittsburgh" and had continued a one-man campaign to keep the subject alive; excellent surveys had been submitted to the legislature in 1842 by Colonel Charles L. Schlatter but it remained for the success of the Erie Canal to galvanize the Assembly into action.9

Construction of the line began at Harrisburg on July 7, 1847, and the first section of the railroad between Harrisburg and Lewistown was opened for service on September 1, 1849. Construction was later also undertaken at the western terminus, Pittsburgh, and twelve miles of the line from Pittsburgh to Brinton or Turtle Creek was completed by the fall of 1851. Although the railroad destined to become the most important in Pennsylvania was thus successfully launched, it had to content itself with being the second to open its rails for traffic at Pittsburgh.

The Ohio and Pennsylvania Railroad was actually the city's first line in operation. This railroad had been chartered in 1848 in order to strike directly into the heart of the Ohio wheat region and, by joining other lines under construction, to link Pittsburgh to Cincinnati and Cleveland. In addition, it was eventually planned to make the railroad part of a chain which would join the Iron City to Chicago or St. Louis.10 A tremendous crowd gathered at the old Canal Basin in Allegheny City (then, politically independent of Pittsburgh proper) on July 3, 1851, to watch workmen move from a canal scow a black and shiny giant called the Salem—the first

10 Branch, op. cit., 6.
locomotive to puff out of Pittsburgh.\textsuperscript{11} A short trial run of the engine caused great excitement for the assembled throng but it was not until July 30 that the formal opening of the railroad took place. Thereafter, crowds invariably jammed the station to watch the coming and departure of the new marvel.\textsuperscript{12}

On December 10, 1851, the Pennsylvania Railroad ran its first excursion train with the usual cargo of distinguished civic and industrial leaders as far east as Turtle Creek. Obviously, the Pennsylvania atoned in some measure for its somewhat tardy arrival on the scene by providing superior coaches; at least this is the impression created from the account in the \textit{Pittsburgh Daily Gazette}. The editor observed that “the roadbed itself was first-rate which allowed for smooth-running cars.” Then he goes on to declare that “the cars are of the first class, and the handsomest, taken as a whole, we have ever seen. They are truly luxurious. At Wilkinsburg and at Turtle Creek very handsome station houses have been erected, and at the latter place there is a turntable, to answer the purposes of an accommodation train to that point.”\textsuperscript{13}

Two annoyances arose almost immediately to plague the long-distance traveler. Despite all the fanfare which attended the inauguration on December 11, 1851, of regular passenger service from Pittsburgh to the East, through-rail accommodations were still incomplete. If one left the city on the 6:30 a.m. train, for example, he was forced to disembark at Turtle Creek, climb into one of the waiting stagecoaches for almost thirty miles of turnpike travel to Beatty’s Station (Latrobe), where he could then resume his railroad service.\textsuperscript{14}

Late in the autumn of 1852, the gap in the rail line between Turtle Creek and Latrobe was completed and put into operation and Pittsburgh was connected by continuous rail with Philadelphia.\textsuperscript{15} Accommodation or commutation trains were running regularly to the eastern suburbs and the section of the main line between Pittsburgh and Turtle Creek became the busiest commuter route in the Pittsburgh Area. Pennsylvania Railroad advertisements in the

\textsuperscript{11} J. P. Cowan, “Beginning of the early railroads in Pittsburgh,” \textit{Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine}, XII (January, 1929), 116-117.
\textsuperscript{13} \textit{Pittsburgh Daily Gazette}, December 11, 1851, 2.
\textsuperscript{14} Branch, \textit{op. cit.}, 12.
\textsuperscript{15} The Pennsylvania had acquired a rail link between Harrisburg and Philadelphia in 1850.
newspapers notified the public that commuter trains departed from the downtown depot for Turtle Creek at 11 a.m., 3:30 p.m., and 6:20 p.m., and that a commuter train going as far as Blairsville departed at 4:30 p.m. daily.\textsuperscript{16}

The Pennsylvania Railroad prospered in these early years. Its original route was located with such engineering skill that very minor changes have been made in over a century of continuous operation. By 1855 the railroad owned 118 locomotives, 119 passenger cars, and 1635 freight cars. Most of the locomotives were wood burners and weighed from fifteen to thirty tons.\textsuperscript{17} While the Pittsburgh terminal was adequate in most respects there arose the second of the two inconveniences mentioned earlier which plagued the traveler. The Ohio and Pennsylvania Railroad had its passenger station and terminal in Allegheny City across the Allegheny River from the Pennsylvania depot.

By this time, the Ohio and Pennsylvania had its direct connections extended as far west as Fort Wayne, Indiana, but all through east-west traffic had to be transferred at Pittsburgh because no connection existed locally between the two railroads. An enabling act had been passed in 1854 permitting the construction of a railroad bridge across the Allegheny River but Allegheny City, fearing a loss of revenue, created intense opposition to the bridge and the work was delayed. It was not until 1858 that the bridge was completed and through traffic flowed uninterrupted between the Pennsylvania Railroad and the Ohio and Pennsylvania.\textsuperscript{18}

While it is true that the east-west railroad lines (of which the Pennsylvania Railroad was the great protagonist) commanded the greatest attention, it should not be inferred that the communities lying to the north and south of Pittsburgh were being neglected. Prior to the Civil War, two major roads were constructed to serve these regions. As early as 1837 local interest had promoted and incorporated the Pittsburgh and Connellsville Railroad which, in addition to providing necessary commuter service, could provide an effective link from Western Pennsylvania to Baltimore. The promoters of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad had envisioned Pittsburgh as the ideal western terminus to link the Maryland city with Ohio River travel. Pittsburgh’s economic interest dictated alle-

\textsuperscript{16} \textit{Pittsburgh Daily Gazette}, January 24, 1855, 3.
\textsuperscript{17} Burgess, op. cit., 84.
Figure 1. Railroads Constructed in the Pittsburgh Area before 1860.

Giance to this bold plan just as surely as Philadelphia's interests were destined to oppose it. Since the Pennsylvania Railroad was controlled by financial interest in the East and since the legislature itself was dominated by Philadelphia interest, it is not surprising to discover that efforts to construct a line from Cumberland, Maryland, through southwestern Pennsylvania were stoutly resisted. The Assembly in Harrisburg steadfastly refused to grant permission for such construction. And the pages of the *Pittsburgh Gazette* bristled with talk of secession from the rest of the Commonwealth if Baltimore was denied direct access to this region.

Cut off from adequate financial backing, the proposed connection between Pittsburgh and Connellsville was repeatedly delayed; a decade passed between the charter date and the beginning of actual construction of the line (1847). And another eight years passed before even the first section of the railroad, running from Connellsville to West Newton, was opened for traffic.19 On the

---

eve of the Civil War, the line was completed to Pittsburgh to make connections with the Pennsylvania Railroad. After the Civil War, permission was finally secured from the State Legislature to construct a tie-in between Connellsville and Cumberland, and the Baltimore and Ohio finally had achieved its goal of reaching into the heart of the Pittsburgh region.  

Paralleling the construction of the southern line were efforts to extend fingers of rail northward along the Allegheny River Valley toward Kittanning. While this effort escaped the frustrations which flowed from the rivalries between two great competing railroads and two ambitious metropolises (Baltimore and Philadelphia), it could not wholly avoid the problems of inadequate financing. Chartered in 1837 to build a line from Pittsburgh to Kittanning, thence by the most direct and eligible route to the New York state line, the Allegheny Valley Railroad was unable to launch actual construction until 1854. The usual press encomiums characterized the running of the first train on January 23, 1856. The Daily Gazette remarked that “a mass assemblage of citizens . . . preceded by Young’s brass band, marched through the major streets of Kittanning.”

The construction of this first small segment strained the company’s limited financial resources and another seven years passed before a ten-mile stretch was pushed to the mouth of Mahoning Creek—little better than an average of a mile a year. In the interim, however, oil fields around Titusville fifty miles to the north, began to expand rapidly and the Pennsylvania Railroad sensed great latent opportunities in oil traffic. Accordingly, the “Pennsy” provided financial backing to the Allegheny Valley Railroad so that by 1868 Venango City (just across the river from Oil City) was linked to Pittsburgh. The line met with instantaneous success; freight revenue jumped five-fold and passenger traffic doubled during the next five years. As the industries developed to the north, small towns mushroomed around the centers of business activity and the Allegheny Valley Railroad soon became an important commuter route.

The advent of regular commuter train service over the railroads of the Pittsburgh region in the early 1850’s had a profound

20 History of Pittsburgh and Environs, 163. Infra. 9.
21 Burgess, op. cit., 162.
22 Pittsburgh Daily Gazette, January 24, 1856, 2.
23 Burgess, op. cit., 104.
effect upon the development of the area. Although frail in construction and slow in movement compared to modern trains, the early commuter train was a vast improvement over existing forms of transportation. In some respects, an entirely different way of life became possible with this new instrumentality. Quoting initially a quaint verse as typical of the time, Branch goes on to note the extreme importance of the coming of the commuter train:

Conductor, when you receive a fare,
Punch in the presence of the passenger!
A blue trip slip for an eight-cent fare,
A buff trip slip for a six-cent fare,
A pink trip slip for a three-cent fare,
Punch in the presence of the passenger!

These trip slips—blue, buff, pink (and Punch)—must be catalogued among the significant documents of history. Implicit in that verse is a revolution in American life: the advent of the commuter. To the commuter are traceable the major distinctions between the modern city and its predecessor of the early nineteenth century. Each smoothing of the highway or acceleration of speed that has widened the commutation area—that has enabled merchant or workman to live three, five, sixty miles from his place of business, as time and economy may allow—is a vastly influential factor in the shaping of an urban area, commercially, residentially, culturally.24

References to three, six and eight-cent fares in the little poem give an idea of the prices charged for tickets on the commuter trains of the 1850's. A return-trip ticket on the Ohio and Pennsylvania Railroad between Allegheny City and New Brighton (about fifty miles round trip) was eighty-five cents in 1852. By 1855, there were five passenger trains operating daily between Allegheny City and New Brighton and thirteen commuter stops. Applications for more stops had been submitted and specifications for a double track were being drawn.25 Season tickets for the regular commuter and package tickets for his family were made available. Picnics and week-ends in the country became popular with Pittsburghers. Sewickley, which in 1850 had been furnishing ten or twelve passengers a week to steamboats, was supplying about a hundred passengers daily to the Ohio and Pennsylvania Railroad by 1855. Branch relates: "It was the decade of the fifties that the commuter in the Pittsburgh region emerged from his chrysalis phases—from enjoying the mud-splashed luxury of a private carriage or enduring the wallowings of the omnibuses or the stages." 26

The service offered by the Pennsylvania Railroad tended to

24 E. D. Branch, "Punch Conductor," The Pittsburgh Record, September, 1936, 36.
25 History of Pittsburgh and Environs, 163.
26 Branch, loc. cit., 37.
increase both population and property values in regions adjacent to its line through East Liberty and Wilkinsburg; for example, in 1865 Sipes marveled at the rapidly expanding rate of East Liberty and this was true of other areas as well. Many fine suburban residences were being built by Pittsburghers in suburban recesses while near the railroad station itself compactly built squares of houses were quickly claiming the beautiful open country, and the commuter train was invariably given credit for the rapid development of the eastern suburbs. By 1870, twenty-eight local trains were running daily between Wilkinsburg, East Liberty and Pittsburgh. Wilkinsburg was at that time surrounded by a rich agricultural area, with market-gardening a leading activity. Coal mining had become important near the town, also, and over three hundred men were employed in the coal industry.

The early commuter trains were small in size. The passenger cars, all of wooden construction, were about thirty-five feet long from coupler to coupler. They had open platforms and a seating capacity of about forty persons. Gas lighting was introduced in some cars in 1859. The passenger engines used by the Pennsylvania were built by Morris and were of the American type, with two pairs of drive wheels and two pairs of leading truck wheels. While the locomotives, weighing from 26,000 to 64,550 pounds, enjoyed a good reputation for speed, their light frames and boilers, however, were sources of rather serious trouble. In these early days wood was the locomotive fuel. Experiments with coal were made as early as 1853, but its general adoption did not come until after 1860.27

Because of the obvious importance of fuel the “wood agent” soon became an important official of the railroad. It was his duty to buy and have stored at the necessary places ample fuel for the locomotives. Wood was plentiful and cheap, and long rows of cord wood at all important stations were a prominent feature of the landscape. Instead of being numbered, the engines were named after prominent stations on the line. The Alliance, Allegheny, Salem and Wellsville were early engines used on the Ohio and Pennsylvania Railroad.28 Accidents were common, due mainly to inexperience in operating procedure and lack of effective safety devices. The small size and frail construction of the early trains

27 Burgess, op. cit., 292.
presented grave problems. One of the early authorities, T. L. Rodgers, declared that: "One great menace to safety in traveling was the number of animals straying on the tracks. Frequently the engine would plow its way into a drove of sheep; in that case it was bad for the sheep, but when a horse or cow was struck, it was very often bad for the train." 29

Stopping the train was a very serious problem. Each car was equipped with a brake operated by a hand wheel. As the train approached the station, the engineer would give the signal for the brakes to be applied and the train crew would operate the brakes on each car by hand. This system limited the length of the train and the speed at which it could safely be operated. 30

Instructions to the stationmasters and conductors, apparently rigidly enforced, give some insight into another side of train operation. Regulations stated that all old material had to be gathered up at least twice a week, and neatly piled at proper places. Briars and undergrowth were to be cleared from the right-of-way, and the station platform and the ground about the station kept clean and in good order. 31 From comments available, it seems that these early stationmasters must have taken great pride in their assignment, much as many English stationmasters do today—going so far as to plant small gardens on the station grounds and competing with other stationmasters for the honor of having the most attractive flower display. Conductors were specifically instructed to be most considerate and respectful in their dealings with the passengers in order to contribute to the travellers' pleasure and comfort. Especially to be watched, and ejected if necessary, were those passengers inclined to indulge in rudeness or profanity. Drunken or disorderly persons were not to be permitted on the train. Much of this early training in courtesy and consideration continues to manifest itself in our own hurly-burly times. 32

Improvements in the construction of the passenger cars and in the operation of trains came rapidly after 1860. A new passenger car seating fifty persons was introduced by the Pennsylvania Railroad in 1862. Light was still provided by candles and heat by a

---

29 Ibid., 5.
30 Burgess, op. cit., 6.
31 Sipes, op. cit., 261.
32 One young lady, for example, commenting on her first ride on a commuter train during the city-wide street car strike of 1955, relates what a change and pleasure it was to be treated like a lady and helped on and off the train.
stove in the center of the car. There were no sanitary facilities. Sipes, describing new cars introduced about 1870 on the Pennsylvania Railroad, emphasizes the safety aspect: "The passenger cars are constructed upon plans carefully prepared by the engineers of the company, the utmost pains being taken to make them safe, comfortable, and handsome. The body of the car is built of great strength, so that, in almost any kind of an accident, the person who is cool enough to keep his seat is sure to escape injury." These cars were heated by stoves bolted to the floor, the fire doors having gratings to prevent the escape of the fire in case the car was upset.

Despite the ravages of the Civil War, four lines were constructed during the sixties and early seventies in the Pittsburgh area. Interestingly enough, all were aided financially during one or more phases of their construction by the Pennsylvania Railroad and all were eventually absorbed into the parent system. It is no slight tribute to the management of the Pennsylvania Railroad to observe parenthetically that the four lines developed rapidly into important freight and commuter routes.

The click of rolling wheels provided a delightful kind of close harmony for the investors in this quartet. Because of their dual capacity as freight and commuter agencies, it is worth mentioning a few details concerning each of these railroads. The Western Pennsylvania Railroad was built from Blairsville, where connection was made with the Pennsylvania, northwest to Freeport on the Allegheny River some forty miles north of Pittsburgh. Service began between the two terminals during July of 1865. The following year when the Pennsylvania Railroad sold to its subsidiary the old canal right-of-way between Freeport and Allegheny City, the Western Pennsylvania Railroad had an ideal route for rail construction into the big industrial center. By 1866 the small railroad had in operation ninety miles between Blairsville and Allegheny City and the following year it became part of the Pennsylvania Railroad, developing rapidly into the profitable Conemaugh Division. At the height of suburban train service during the first quarter of this century, many commuter trains operated over this division to Allegheny Valley points.

The second of the quartet, the Pittsburgh and Steubenville

33 Sipes, op. cit., 28.
34 Burgess, op. cit., 110.
35 Ibid., 111.
Railroad, suffered from stormy rivalry between Virginia, which jealously sought to preserve her substantial interest in the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, and Pennsylvania. Virginia's opposition, coupled with scarcity of capital, impeded construction until late in 1862—exactly thirteen years after the line had actually been incorporated. The secession of West Virginia from the Old Dominion settled the territorial conflict and war needs dictated the importance of a link between Pittsburgh and Steubenville. Traffic from Pittsburgh to the Ohio city opened on October 9, 1865, allowing through-train service to Columbus. In 1868 the Pennsylvania gained control of these lines through its subsidiary company, the Pittsburgh, Cincin-

nati, and St. Louis Railroad—more commonly known as the Pan-

handle Division of the Pennsylvania System.

The importance of "little Washington" as a trading town on the National Pike suggested immediately the value of rail link with
Pittsburgh; furthermore, rich bituminous coal deposits lay all along
the proposed route. To tap these resources, there was incorporated
in 1853 the Chartiers Valley Railroad. When surveys clearly show-
ed that the Pittsburgh and Steubenville Railroad had the only prac-
tical route between Pittsburgh and Carnegie, it was decided to
launch the Chartiers Valley line at the latter point. Service to
Canonsburg opened in 1870 and to Washington in 1871. The usual
development occurred when, in the following year, the railroad was
leased to the Pennsylvania to become part of the Panhandle Division.36

The Pittsburgh, Virginia and Charleston Railroad was char-
tered in 1867 to reach into the rich bituminous coal lands adjacent
to the Monongahela River in Washington, Westmoreland and Greene
Counties. Financial difficulties plagued early construction efforts
begun in 1868, and Pennsylvania interests gained control of the
property the following year. The Pennsylvania Annual Report of
1871 best indicates the reasoning which prompted the acquisition of
the southbound line:

The difficulty in passing freight trains from the south branch of the
Monongahela through the tunnel under Grant's Hill in Pittsburgh, and our
yards adjacent to it, has been found so serious that it has been deemed
advisable to continue a line at once through Birmingham (under the charter
of the Pittsburgh, Virginia and Charleston Railroad Company) to a point
above Turtle Creek, from whence a branch road will cross the Mononga-
hela to the Pennsylvania Railroad upon a route of better gradients and
a shorter distance than now used. The Pittsburgh, Virginia and Charleston
is to be continued up the Valley of the Monongahela through a fertile and
prosperous region, containing exhaustless fields of the best bituminous
coal and must, in itself, prove a profitable enterprise.37

The road was completed from Pittsburgh's South Side to Mo-
ongahela City in 1872 and later extended to West Brownsville.

The importance of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad to Pitts-
burgh dictates that the risk of repetition must be borne in order
to re-emphasize the extremely crucial importance of this line as a
vehicle for southbound traffic. It will be recalled that the Balti-
more and Ohio, as early as 1842, had sought access to Pittsburgh—
only to see their ambitions frustrated by the Pennsylvania Legis-
lature. Thwarted in its frontal attack, the line's management seized
the opportunity to acquire substantial interest in the Pittsburgh and
Connellsville Railroad which left only the Connellsville-Cumberland
link to be completed. At this thriving little Maryland city connec-

36 H. W. Schotter, The Growth and Development of the Pennsylvania Railroad
37 Quoted by Burgess, op. cit., 119.
tions could be made with the main line of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad. The fiercely partisan aspect of the struggle was forcefully brought out by the historian of the Baltimore and Ohio, Edward Hungerford, who described the elation of the company when the "invasion" of Pittsburgh had been successfully completed.

Pittsburgh—then, as today, the very center and citadel of the Pennsylvania's best traffic pie—after terrific effort, both financial and constructive, was invaded. Through trains between Cumberland and Pittsburgh, over what was for a time continued as the Pittsburgh and Connellsville Railroad, but which was afterwards absorbed by the parent Baltimore and Ohio company, began in June 1871. The enemy's country had indeed been invaded successfully. No longer could the powerful Pennsylvania feel that it held an important industrial city absolutely in the hollow of its hand and free from any outside interference. While, for the Baltimore and Ohio, there finally had been gained an entrance into a city without a peer anywhere in this world for the production of freight tonnage.38

Of the principal railroads to enter the Pittsburgh region, the Pittsburgh and Lake Erie was the last to be constructed, and was strictly post-bellum in incorporation and execution. The idea of a railroad along the southwesterly bank of the Ohio crossing at Beaver to move toward Youngstown was conceived in 1875 by William McCreery and his companion, one Charles A. Cooper of the engineering firm of Dedburn and Cooper. McCreery and Cooper surveyed the route in the guise of hunters, presumably to prevent suspicion on the part of the Pennsylvania, whose Fort Wayne line would parallel the proposed route for more than half the distance. Actual construction began in 1877 with substantial support from Pittsburgh interests; while there is evidence to suggest that Pennsylvania Railroad interests viewed the project with skepticism, the line proved to be an immediate success. From its beginning in 1879 it made more money per mile than any other railroad in America.39

In 1884, the Pittsburgh and Lake Erie Railroad leased a line (the Pittsburgh, McKeesport and Youghiogheny) which had been completed the previous year from the South Side of Pittsburgh to Connellsville. The addition enabled the Pittsburgh and Lake Erie to provide a direct connection between the Connellsville coke-making region and the Youngstown steel district.40

Things did not go smoothly all the time as the great railroad

40 *Railroads of the Pittsburgh District* (Report No. 5, Citizens Committee on City Plan of Pittsburgh, October, 1923), 51.
riots at Pittsburgh in 1877 testify. Continued layoffs and wage reductions in the railroad industry during a period of depression and industrial strife, led to a strike at the Pennsylvania yard outside Union Depot the morning of July 19, 1877. When local militia proved incapable of controlling the worsening situation, the Governor of the state ordered a division of the state guard from Philadelphia to Pittsburgh. The guardsmen arrived on the scene in the afternoon of July 21. Shortly after five o'clock, the guards fired upon an angry mob near the Twenty-eighth Street roundhouse. This action served as the spark which touched off the terrible riot and burning spree. The infuriated crowd, having secured guns of their own, drove the badly outnumbered guardsmen into the nearby roundhouse and tried to set the building on fire. In the meantime, others ran wildly about, setting fire to railway cars and buildings.

The editor of the Commercial Gazette related that the mob resorted to violent incendiarism, which beggared adequate description, and which, "in point of malicious and wanton destruction of property," had never been equalled in the United States or perhaps in any other civilized country.41 The burnt-over area extended all the way from Thirty-second Street to the Union Station. Hundreds of freight and passenger cars were destroyed, as well as some 125 locomotives. Buildings totally destroyed included two roundhouses, car shops, machine shop, a large lumber yard, a large grain elevator, and the Union Station itself. Estimates of the damage ran as high as ten million dollars. The strike stopped all traffic on the Fort Wayne, the Panhandle and the Allegheny Valley divisions, in addition to the main line. More than ten days elapsed before normal traffic could resume. In spite of such temporary set-backs the railroads soon came to dominate freight movement in the Pittsburgh region bringing the full benefits of efficient, speedy transportation to the Western Pennsylvania community.

Acknowledgment

The author acknowledges with gratitude his indebtedness to Professors Asher Isaacs and Reuben Slesinger of the University of Pittsburgh for permission to extract parts of his doctoral dissertation for publication in this journal.

41 Pittsburgh Commercial Gazette, July 23, 1877, I.