

CENTRAL HEADLIGHT

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FROM STILTS TO STEEL

CONSTRUCTING THE LAKESHORE LINES FROM CLEVELAND TO TOLEDO

PART 1 — 1835-1850

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The Beginning

Most rail lines and networks in existence today resulted from a series of mergers, consolidations, and reconstruction. One could say that this was doubly true of the New York Central System's magnificent Water Level Route and Norwalk Branch between Cleveland and Toledo. To produce barely two hundred miles of railroad, seven different corporations spent almost four decades planning, building, combining, abandon-

ing, tearing up, re-routing, and rebuilding track. The following is an account of how this process unfolded. Before getting into specifics, it will help to provide a few pertinent geographical and historical facts about the history of Lakeshore Ohio, its settlement, and its early transportation difficulties.

The region between the Appalachians and the Mississippi River is split between two immense watersheds, the Ohio River Valley and the Great Lakes. The



Pictured is a regenerating remnant of the Great Black Swamp at the Ottawa National Wildlife Reserve east of Toledo. This drowned lake bed of Lake Maumee spread over an area the size of Connecticut. It was a place where rivers could be a mile and a half wide, entire townships flood, and early settlers could spend weeks traveling a few miles. The swamp completely blocked westward movement of settlers immediately south of Lake Erie. Settlers wishing to reach Northern Indiana, Michigan, and Northern Illinois either had to come north from the Ohio Valley or sail west on Lake Erie to Michigan. Photo by Ron Helmecci.

Mississippi drains most of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, and Wisconsin. Only Michigan, the very northern parts of Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois, and eastern Wisconsin drain into the Great Lakes. In a few places, such as Chicago and eastern Ohio, the Mississippi basin nearly touches or does touch the lakes themselves. South of Lake Erie, the drainage basin rarely extends more than twenty or thirty miles from the lake.

Before the opening of the Erie Canal, the only water exit from the lakes was past Niagara Falls and then down the rapids-strewn St. Lawrence River. Aside from these obstacles, this route was ice-bound much of the year and in the hands of the hostile British.

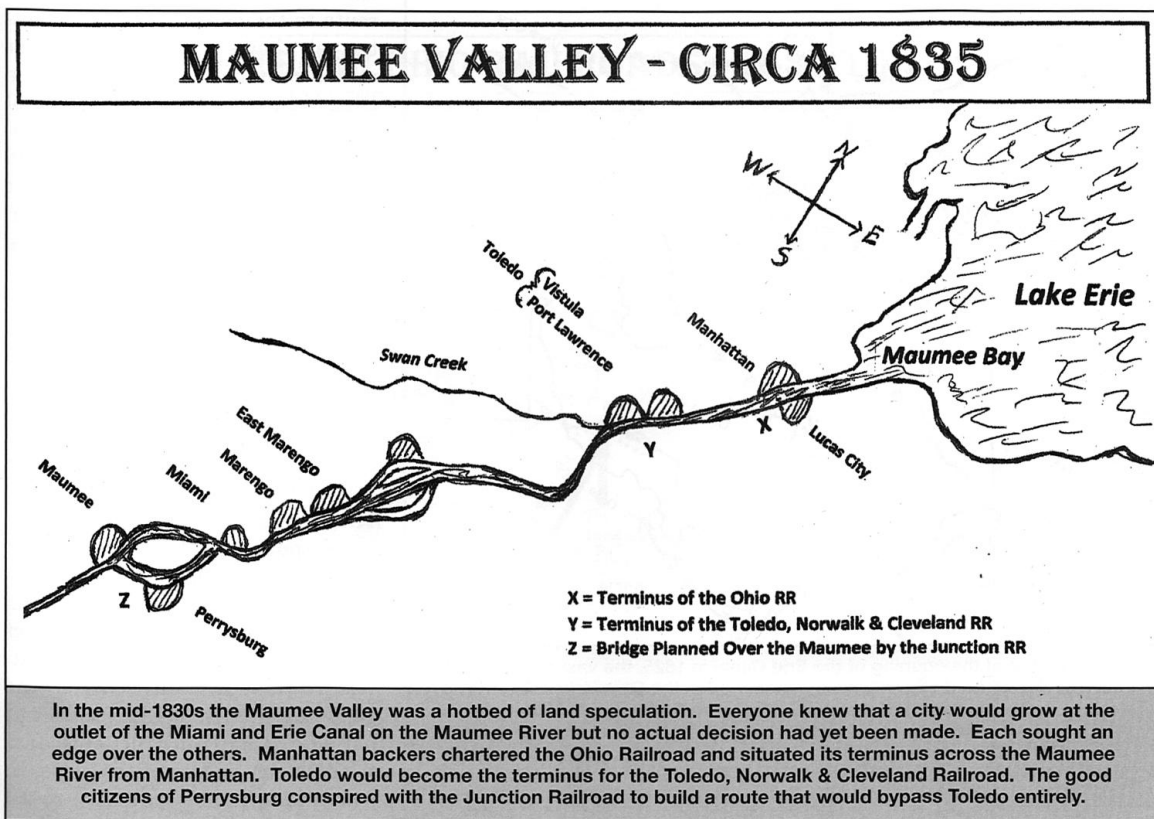
When settlers began to flood west after the Revolutionary War, most headed for the Ohio Valley. The only way to conduct trade was by water, and whatever its shortcomings, the Ohio River did provide a workable transportation system. The trip from the Pittsburgh and Ohio regions to sell goods in New Orleans was long and dangerous, but it was an outlet for the hogs, whiskey, lumber, and crops beginning to be produced. The advent of the steamboat allowed badly needed trade goods to be brought upriver to feed the huge latent demand. By the 1820s the Ohio Valley had a

rapidly growing population, and trade was even developing within the basin between one part and another.

Those settlers who ventured into the Lakeshore region of Northern Ohio after the threat from Britain was removed by the War of 1812 found that a much harsher and threatening landscape awaited them. The area from the Pennsylvania border to western Sandusky Bay, 120 miles to the west, devoid of people ever since the Iroquois annihilated the Erie during the Beaver Wars of the late 1600s, was a densely forested region buried under massive lake effect snows in the winter. To the west of Sandusky Bay lay the Great Black Swamp, an impassible morass roughly the size of Connecticut. This flooded lake bed of ancient Lake Maumee was bounded by the Sandusky River to the east and the Maumee River to the west. Sixty miles in width, it reached inland in a southwest direction to as far as the present Fort Wayne, Indiana. Shunned by man and beast alike, it served as a nearly absolute barrier to land travel along the southern lakeshore. Few ventured in and fewer came out.

Although Lakeshore Ohio was roughly five hundred miles from New York City and Philadelphia by land,

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for all practical purposes it may as well have been on the far side of the moon. While it was possible, though expensive and time-consuming, to transport goods down the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers to the Gulf and then to New York City by ship, a distance of several thousand miles, it simply wasn't possible to move any volume of goods between Lakeshore Ohio and the East Coast. In an age where most transportation was tied to water, the Appalachians were an impenetrable barrier. From Nova Scotia to Georgia only one river, the Mohawk, flowed west to east through the Appalachians and it was not navigable for much of its length. What little trade that did trickle through by land from the east or from the Ohio Valley was not enough to sustain even the most basic needs. The settlers were forced into subsistence living, using up what little they brought with them.

Additional misery was heaped upon the settlers through the process whereby the region was settled.

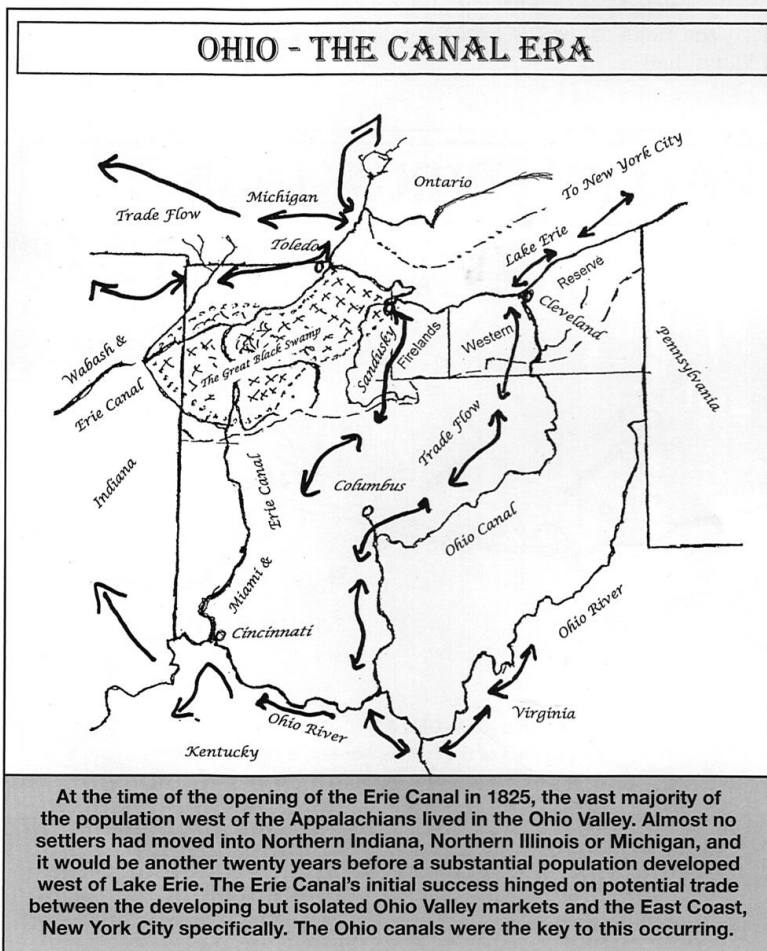
After the Revolution, Connecticut had retained the area from the Pennsylvania border to Sandusky Bay when it surrendered the remainder of its western land claims. This became the Western Reserve and Firelands regions. In an effort to be scrupulously fair in awarding land to the initial investors, the region was thoroughly surveyed and every acre assessed. Every investor was given land of roughly equal quality but each investor's holdings were scattered over the entire Reserve. As a result, when settlers purchased properties from these investors, they likewise found themselves scattered in isolated holdings throughout the Reserve, far from the lake and other settlers, unable to aid or even visit one another. Isolated from the East and isolated within the Reserve, the hoped-for freedom and prosperity gave way to poverty, sickness, and despair.

It only took one day to turn the entire trans-Appalachian region topsy-turvy. When the Erie Canal opened on October 26, 1825 the colossal potential of the Great Lakes transportation network was unleashed, whole new regions were opened to settlement and trade, and Lakeshore Ohio went from wretched

isolation to being in the catbird seat. Aside from those in Buffalo and Erie, Lakeshore Ohioans now had the shortest and safest all-water route to the eastern seaboard. Better yet, they sat on top of the best routes from the Great Lakes into the Ohio Valley. To tap into and control the trade that would develop between the East Coast and the Ohio Valley, they merely had to construct another canal or two. Ohioans had looked ahead, and this work was well on its way.

The Canal Era

As the Erie Canal took form and transformed dream into reality, Ohioans spent long hard hours debating the best way in which the state could wring the maximum benefit from this grand new thing. The obvious solution was to dig a canal connecting Lake Erie to the Ohio River, so that settlers both in the interior of Ohio and those living in the Ohio Valley would have direct and easy water access to the east. When a canal was authorized by the Ohio Legislature in 1822, the original plan was to construct one canal through the middle of the state, in which case Sandusky, on the south



shore of Sandusky Bay, would have been the outlet on Lake Erie. When this was scuttled for lack of an adequate water supply, it was decided to build two canals and so situate them as to serve as many settlers in the interior of the state as possible. These were the Ohio and Erie Canal, which would connect Portsmouth on the Ohio River with Cleveland, and the Miami and Erie Canal, which would connect Cincinnati to Lake Erie at the mouth of the Maumee River.

Since some regions of the state would not be helped by these canals, it was agreed that a second round of internal improvements targeting these "bypassed" regions would follow their completion. This second round would start once the Ohio and Erie Canal was totally completed and the Miami and Erie Canal was completed as far as Dayton.

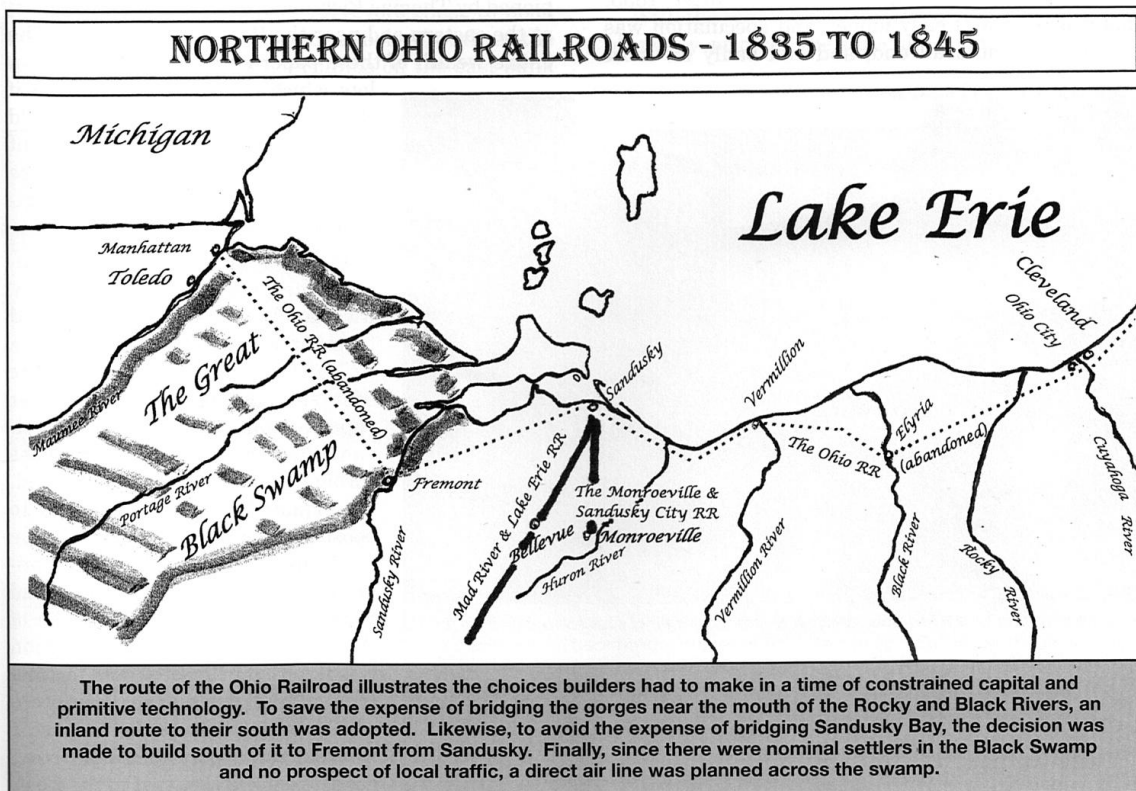
New York businessmen, giddy from their success with the Erie Canal and eager to extend their reach into the Ohio Valley, advanced capital to Ohio to construct the canals. Construction started at Cleveland on the Ohio and Erie Canal on July 4, 1825. The first boat reached Lake Erie from Akron two years later, and the canal was completed by 1832. To the west, construction started on the Miami and Erie in 1825 at Cincinnati and was completed to just north of

Dayton in 1830. The first round of canal building was done and quite a success it was. Transportation costs plummeted to a fifth of what they had been, the Ohio Valley had a much shorter path to market, and the tolls allowed the State of Ohio to easily pay down the debt incurred to fund construction.

With the core of the canal system built and operating, the Ohio Legislature turned to the next round. At the very least, the Miami and Erie Canal had to be finished from Dayton to Lake Erie. Aside from this commitment, the state, as part of the initial agreement to build the canals, had promised to bring transportation improvements to those parts of the state bypassed in the initial program. The bypassed areas included Southeastern Ohio and the region between Toledo and Cleveland. Originally, the state planned to build or fund feeder canals where feasible and roads elsewhere. But times had changed and the railroad had burst upon the scene. Accordingly, legislators agreed to include them as an option.

New York capitalists were willing to advance funds for the first canals because they were of the opinion that the canals would benefit New York City nearly as much as Ohio. But they were not fool enough to back

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strictly internal improvements in Ohio. By this time, though, the completed canals were actually generating a surplus. Then, in 1836, the Federal Congress distributed the Federal surplus back to the states, with Ohio receiving 2.7 million dollars. Furthermore, this was a period of easy money, so that funds were available to private ventures. Together, these three sources of financing permitted a workable solution.

In 1837, legislators passed the "Loan Law," which would allow any Ohio chartered transportation project, including railroads, to receive state bonds equal to one-third of their authorized capital. In this phase, the state would not do the actual construction nor would they own the improvements. Instead, private enterprises were expected to take the lead in securing financing and undertaking the actual improvements. If projects met certain conditions, then the state would invest up to one-third of the necessary capital needed to fund the project. With the passage of this act, destined to live in history as the "Plunder Act," the railroad era in Northern Ohio began.

The First Era, Circa 1835 to 1847

Lakeshore Ohio, like many regions, experienced a railroad building boom immediately after 1835. This was an era of easy money and speculation was rampant. It would all end, and end badly for most

early efforts, after 1837, when a brutal nationwide depression took hold and business and credit withered. As Frederic L. Paxson, Pulitzer Prize winning historian of the American West, so pithily noted, "The lines undertaken between 1835 and 1847 are to be regarded as pioneer enterprises conceived in poverty and inexperience, prostrated by general bankruptcy, and revived only in another decade." (Paxson, October, 1912 Reprinted) Never were truer words spoken.

In the early 1830s a dollar and a dream were all that was needed to plot an empire in Northern Ohio. All along the lakeshore, speculators were chartering towns and cities, often in direct competition with already established settlements. Buffalo, as the outlet on Lake Erie of the Erie Canal, had experienced explosive growth. Everyone expected the same to happen on the Maumee River, once the canal reached the lake. As a result, paper towns sprung up like mushrooms in the Maumee Valley. Manhattan, located near the mouth of the Maumee River and funded by investors from Buffalo, competed with Port Lawrence, funded by Cincinnati interests. Vistula, Maumee, and Perrysburg, among others, had their backers. All hoped to be located at the point where the canal would meet the river. Ohio City, an actual settlement on the west side of the Cuyahoga, competed with Cleveland on the east. Richmond, championed by Thomas Richmond, competed with Fairport, at the eastern end near the Pennsylvania border. The entire wealth of these paper cities was in their town

lots, which could be worth a fortune if the settlement prospered and would be worth nothing if the settlement withered. The promoters of these towns were willing to invest in whatever promised to give them an edge.

In hopes of gaining this advantage, the promoters of Manhattan, Richmond, and Ohio City banded together to back the building of a 177-mile-long railroad from the east shore of the Maumee River opposite Manhattan to the Pennsylvania border, one which would pass through Ohio City and Richmond. Its primary purpose would be to boost the fortunes and solidify the positions of these towns. Its secondary purpose was to haul freight and passengers during those months of the year when lake transportation was impossible. And, should fortune truly shine down, the promoters would benefit from the role this railroad could play in transporting goods from the Midwest to the East.



Aside from the Black Swamp, railroad builders planning a lakeshore line on the south shore of Lake Erie confronted other features produced by successive waves of glaciation. As the final period of glaciation ebbed and the land rebounded from the weight of the ice, the rivers between Cleveland and Sandusky cut deep gorges into the landscape as they flowed toward the lake. Rather than shoulder the burden of bridging these gorges, builders elected to swing inland through Berea and Elyria before returning to the lake. Pictured is the gorge cut by the Vermilion River. Photo by Ron Helmecci.

In fact, they envisioned it as the connecting link between a myriad of Midwestern and Eastern railroads. That not one of these had yet been built or even had a chance to be built was a mere detail.

In anticipation of passage of the "Loan Law," the Ohio Railroad was chartered on March 8, 1836 and organized on April 25, 1836 at the Mansion House in Painesville. The incorporators included Heman Ely, Charles C. Paine, John W. Allen, Thomas Richmond, and Samuel Wilson, among others. Nehemiah Allen, an investor in Manhattan, was chosen president, and Samuel Wilson was named treasurer. The capital stock was four million dollars, at one hundred dollars per share. While the main purpose of the charter was to authorize the building of the railroad, it also authorized the company to act as a bank with the right to issue paper money. This was quite handy, since if one had a dream but no dollar, all one had to do was print one.

Starting at the Pennsylvania border, the surveyors laid out a route that ran through Richmond and then closely followed the lakeshore to Cleveland and Ohio City. On leaving Ohio City it angled inland along the Lorain Road, so that the Black River could be more easily bridged at Elyria, and then returned to the lake at Vermilion on the way through Huron to Sandusky. At Sandusky, to avoid the expense associated with bridging Sandusky Bay, the surveyors chose to head straight to Fremont (Lower Sandusky) south of the bay. From Fremont to the terminus on the east bank

of the Maumee River opposite Manhattan, an airline across the Black Swamp would be built. The survey was completed by 1836 at a cost of \$6,000.

The plan was to build a strap iron railroad on top of a row of pilings, earning the road the sobriquet "The Road on Stilts." In anticipation of a flood of traffic, it would be double-tracked. The precise construction specifications are described in the following:

For the use of the road, ground 100 feet in width was cleared. There were required 112 piles [*sic*] and 1,056 ties per mile – the former varying from 7 to 28 feet in length, (according to the grade), and from 12 to 16 inches in diameter... Upon the head of each pair of piles was fitted a tie, 8x8 inches, in which a gain was cut nine inches wide and four deep, the tie being pinned down through this gain with a two-inch cedar pin; but before this was done a pint of salt was deposited in the augur hole of each pile, which, permeating the wood, was expected materially to preserve the same from decay. ... The rails or stringers were 8x8, and 15 feet in length. On the wood stringers thus provided were to be placed iron ["strap"] rails, of the weight of twenty-five tons to the mile. (Frohman, Charles E., *Sandusky's Yesterdays*, Columbus, Ohio: The Ohio Historical Society, 1968, p. 79.)

With the route surveyed, the right-of-way, and a pile of money printed, the directors immediately fell out

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Probably the only thing more weakly capitalized than frontier railroads were frontier banks. Ironically, a major source of funding for the Ohio Railroad was the currency issued by its own bank, whose main asset was money received from the State of Ohio. Nonetheless, vendors and contractors were glad to receive its currency, like this \$2 bill, since it was the first paper money many had seen since leaving the East. With the bankruptcy, the currency became worthless. Unfortunately it lingered on to serve as a reminder against investing in railroads. Author's collection.

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over the best strategy to pursue. Thomas Richmond planned to start construction at Cleveland and work east to Richmond and the Pennsylvania state line. His plan was to complete ten or twenty miles of roadway, equip it, and start operations. The operating profits would help fund additional construction, and the company would have physical assets against which money could be raised. This process would be carried on until the railway was finished. However, on one of his occasional visits to Cleveland, in 1839, to check on events, he found that he had been completely outmaneuvered by Nehemiah Allen, who already had two machines operating at the west end driving pilings. Richmond claimed that Allen made this decision on his own without any authorization by the Board of Directors, who had to approve when and where construction would begin. Enraged or disgusted or both, he resigned, was paid for his stock and left, prophesying that the enterprise would fail. From this point on this became strictly a Manhattan project, and construction was limited to the area between Ohio City and Manhattan.

Construction in the west started with local settlers clearing the right-of-way through the swamps east of Manhattan for the track, stations, and town sites. Once the right-of-way was cleared to a width of 100 feet, pile driving began. Under the supervision of Two Stickney, hero of the Toledo War and younger brother of One Stickney, the first pile-driver was delivered by ship to the shore of the Maumee River opposite Manhattan. A second pile-driver was delivered to Fremont. Work began almost simultaneously at Manhattan and Fremont in June, 1839 with both machines heading into the Black Swamp to meet in the middle. These wheeled

pile drivers would have been a sight to behold, even today, and the entire process was well described in the *Manhattan Advertiser*, November 19, 1839.

We have frequently visited this machine, and witnessed its operations, with a degree of wonder which we have seldom felt in examining the handiwork of modern machinists. Indeed, no one who has not seen its power and action can have even a remote idea of it. But great as our admiration had previously been, we cannot but still be more astonished [by] the increased regularity and facility with which it now operates.

Everything is done by steam. The piles raised from the ground to a perpendicular – the hammers (which have a projectile force of 30,000 pounds) alternately elevated to a height of 25 or 30 feet, and discharged in quick succession – the piles gauged and sawed off – the boiler furnished with water from the reservoir, - and finally, after driving a set in advance, the whole machine, by its own power, carried itself forward to the proper point for driving the next. One of the most singular feats of its performance is the perfect ease with which it crosses low grounds such as bayous, ravines, streams, etc. preserving its grade and freedom of action as well at an elevation of 20 feet from the surface as upon firm ground. It is wonderful and marvelous to see such a thing of wood and iron, and fire and water, walking deliberately and safely, and almost intellectually, over the deep morasses of the Black Swamp, apparently by its own volition, making its own road – as it passes. It can do everything but talk, and gives such specimens of “tall walking” as would shame even the veriest giant of ancient fable.

We have seen much machinery, simple, complex and compound; but “never in our born days saw the likes of this,” -it’s worth coming from Dan to Beersheba to see. (Frohman, 1968, pp. 78, 79.)

Relatively rapid progress was made. Once up to speed, the *Lower Sandusky Whig* reported in July 1840, “that the pile-drivers were well into the Black Swamp, and advancing at the rate of 500 or 600 feet daily.” By 1841, the two machines met near Toussaint Creek and the piling structure was completed from the Maumee to Fremont. By now, two additional machines were also at work, one progressing east from Sandusky and the other west from Ohio City. An additional 36 miles of pilings were driven before the project collapsed in 1842 and was liquidated through bankruptcy.

The loss to the State of Ohio was almost total. Most of this loss was due to the fact that the private capital put into the enterprise was chiefly land assessed at



Here is an actual segment from one of the Ohio Railroad pilings. Roughly a foot in diameter, this particular specimen is in very good condition for being over 110 years old when photographed in 1957. Charles E. Frohman Collection/Hayes Presidential Center.

wildly inflated prices. The only real capital had been the matching funds advanced by the state. Given that most of the other money advanced under the Loan Law was similarly lost, this result was not unusual. In fact, due to public revulsion at these losses, the Ohio Constitution was amended in 1851 to prohibit any state investment in private enterprises.

While devastating to a region desperate for transportation improvements, there was a silver lining. The settlers were able, for the first time, to be part of a cash economy, even if the cash was Ohio Railroad money. Several bridges were reused, as was much of the wooden superstructure. The right-of-way between Elyria and Fremont was retained and put to later use. The mainline of the NYC between Elyria and Sandusky would be constructed on the old Ohio Railroad right-of-way. The Lake Erie & Western Railroad (LE&W) (affectionately known as the "Leave Early & Walk") would use the stretch between Sandusky and Fremont. While Manhattan did not flourish as a city on its own, it did become an important part of a greater city of Toledo.

Three other roads important to this story were started during this period. Sandusky had lost out to Cleveland and Toledo in the canal competition. As a result, the citizens embraced this new technology wholeheartedly and never looked back. They had two goals in mind. The first was to provide an all-weather route be-

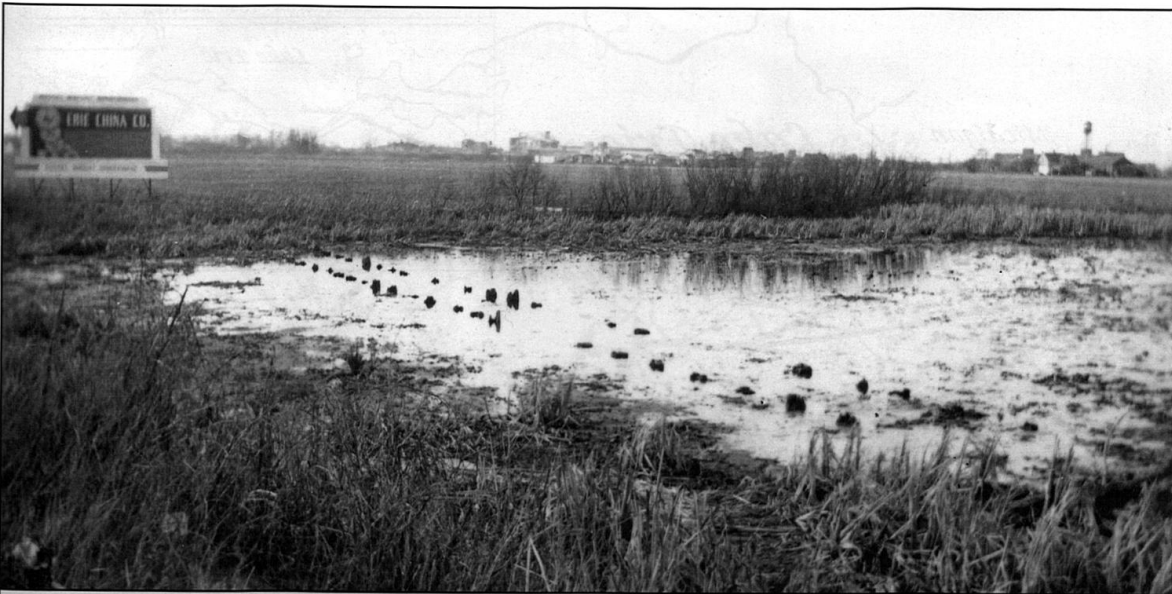
tween the Ohio Valley and Sandusky, thereby gaining a nearly insurmountable advantage. They also hoped to scuttle the planned extension of the Miami & Erie Canal to Toledo from Dayton by siphoning off so much traffic that it would not be needed. Cleveland, a winner in the canal competition, wanted to capture traffic from its hinterland as well as stay ahead of Sandusky.

In 1836, Clevelanders chartered the Cleveland, Columbus & Cincinnati Railroad (CC&C) to link its namesake cities. Another victim of the 1837 Depression, no track was laid, and it lingered on as a charter only.

Sanduskians chartered the Mad River & Lake Erie Railroad (MR&LE) on January 5, 1832 to run between Sandusky and Dayton, the northern terminus of the Miami & Erie Canal. The company was organized and ground was broken on August 17, 1835. By the time the enterprise lay prostrate a few years later, it had actually succeeded in construction of a working rail line from Sandusky to Bellevue, fifteen miles to the southwest, and it began service on May 11, 1838.

The cornerstone had barely been laid for the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad before Sanduskians were planning a rail link to intersect with it on the Ohio River, probably at Marietta. Showing considerable determination, they incorporated the Monroeville & Sandusky City Railroad (M&SC) on March 9, 1835. Monroeville was situated about ten miles south of Sandusky and

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Taken in 1949, this photo shows a string of pilings from the Ohio Railroad at Pipe Creek, Ohio, just to the east of downtown Sandusky. This road is often portrayed as nothing but a scam to swindle money from the State of Ohio under the "Plunder Act." In fact, despite the Depression of 1837, the route was surveyed, the right-of-way secured, and sixty some miles of pilings were driven through swamp and marsh. While never becoming operational, it certainly could have been made so and it certainly would have been a huge benefit to the settlers in the region. Charles E. Frohman Collection/Presidential Center.

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a mere 150 miles north of Marietta. By July 1835, a route had been selected. In September, ground was broken in a joint ceremony with the MR&LE. Within a short time, a narrow gauge, strap rail horse-powered railroad was operating between the two cities.

From the shambles left by the economic crisis of 1837, these three lines, their track and/or charters intact, would live on to become important elements in the rail network that ultimately blossomed in Ohio. However, before the next major round of construction could begin, a decade would be spent laying the groundwork.

The Second Era, Circa 1848 to 1850

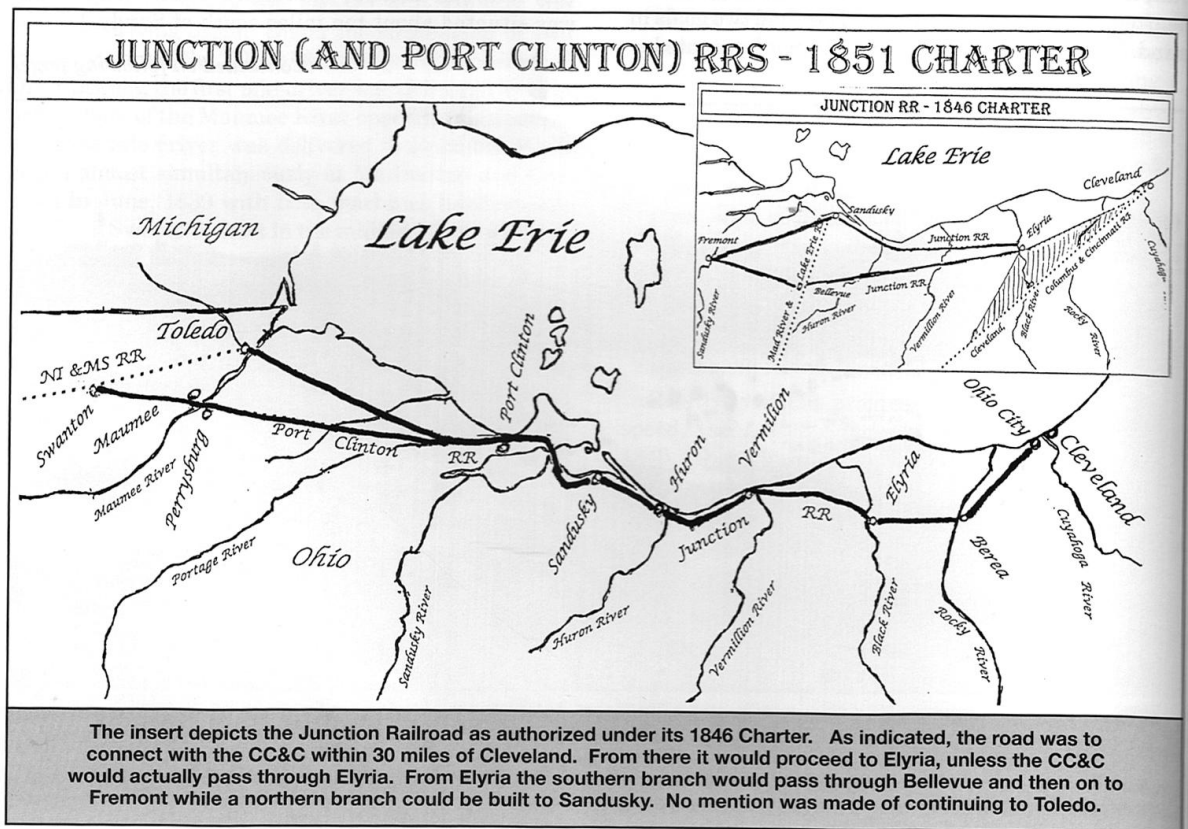
By the middle of the 1840s, the overall economy was on the mend. The population of the Lakeshore region continued to increase and capital was being accumulated in Cleveland and elsewhere. More importantly, the region west of Lake Erie was being settled and developed, and a Great Lakes trade and transportation system was developing.

Steamships on Lake Erie were carrying a steady stream of passengers and freight from the east to Toledo and Monroe at the western end of the lake, simply

bypassing the Black Swamp. Efforts, still largely moribund, were being made to build rail lines across the base of the lower peninsula of Michigan to speed travel. Chicago was starting to develop as a port to serve the shipping trade sailing around the lower peninsula of Michigan on Lake Michigan and Lake Huron.

As a result, in this second round of railroad construction, the emphasis would shift. Cleveland and Sandusky would still be focused on consolidating their hold on and expansion of the north/south trade between Lake Erie and the Ohio Valley. But as the region west of Lake Erie was developed and rail lines were pushed through to Lake Erie from New York City and elsewhere, the need for a lakeshore line to connect the two became paramount. Instead of being driven by the needs of real estate speculators, a new economic reality would drive the need for a lakeshore line.

Financing would also be different this time around. The good citizens of Ohio had had their fill of state funding of risky transportation projects and prohibited it by constitutional amendment in 1851. However, in partial recompense, the state did allow for county and local governments to issue bonds backed by taxes, the funding to be used to subscribe to the stock of local enterprises, including railroads. The main conditions



were a limit on the amount that could be issued, and eligible voters had to approve the subscription beforehand. These bonds were the main funding source for the next round of construction.

By 1845, the citizens of Sandusky and Cleveland were again starting to discuss railroad construction. Those in Cleveland were the first to act. In March 1845 the CC&C charter was revised and amended to permit building as far as Columbus, although Cincinnati was still the preferred terminus. While not a lakeshore line, it did have the right to "unite with any other railroad running in any direction," a handy and generous provision.

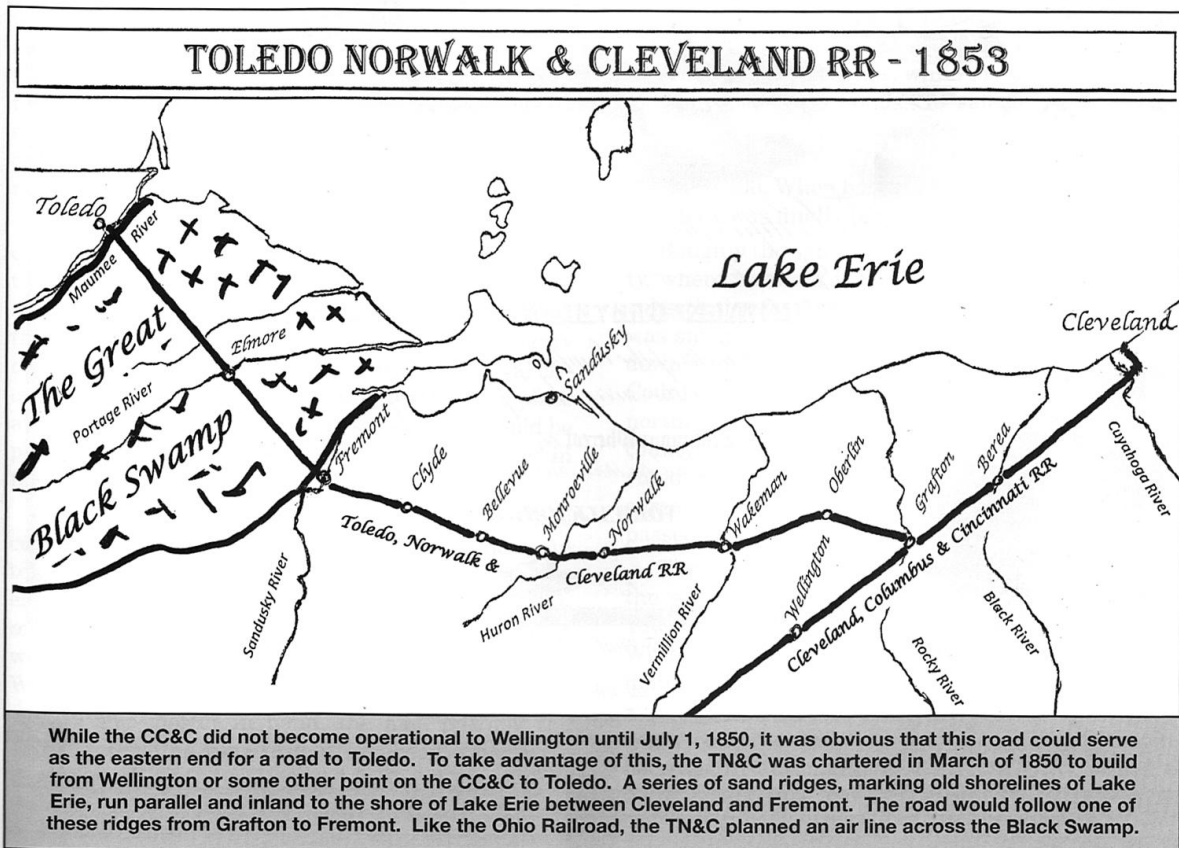
This opened up the possibility of an all-weather route between Sandusky and Cleveland, and led to a newcomer on the scene. On March 2, 1846, a group of citizens from Lorain, Erie, Sandusky, and Huron counties incorporated the Junction Railroad. Its purpose was to connect the CC&C with the MR&LE, hence its name.

The charter, as was characteristic of the time, allowed a great deal of discretion as to when and where the railroad would be built. Specifically, on the eastern end, the railroad was authorized to commence at some point on the CC&C within thirty miles of Cleveland,

either in Cuyahoga or Lorain Counties. From that point construction was to proceed to Elyria, in Lorain County, unless the connection with the CC&C was at Elyria. From Elyria, the road was to be built to connect with the MR&LE either at Bellevue or some other more feasible point. From there the road was to run to Lower Sandusky (Fremont). The charter also authorized building a branch from Sandusky City to Elyria. If no agreement could be reached with the directors of the CC&C, then the company could either build directly from Cleveland to Elyria or could choose to have the Ohio Supreme Court determine a junction point. The company had five years to organize and ten years to either construct twenty miles of track or surrender the charter. A mere \$2,000 would suffice to get the enterprise, if not the trains, rolling. In this charter no mention was made either of building to Toledo or of public financing.

Surprisingly enough, investors stayed away in droves, leaving both enterprises stillborn. Nevertheless, in 1847, the firm of Harbach, Stone and Witt agreed to begin constructing the CC&C, taking most of their pay in stock. Alfred Kelly, who was building the

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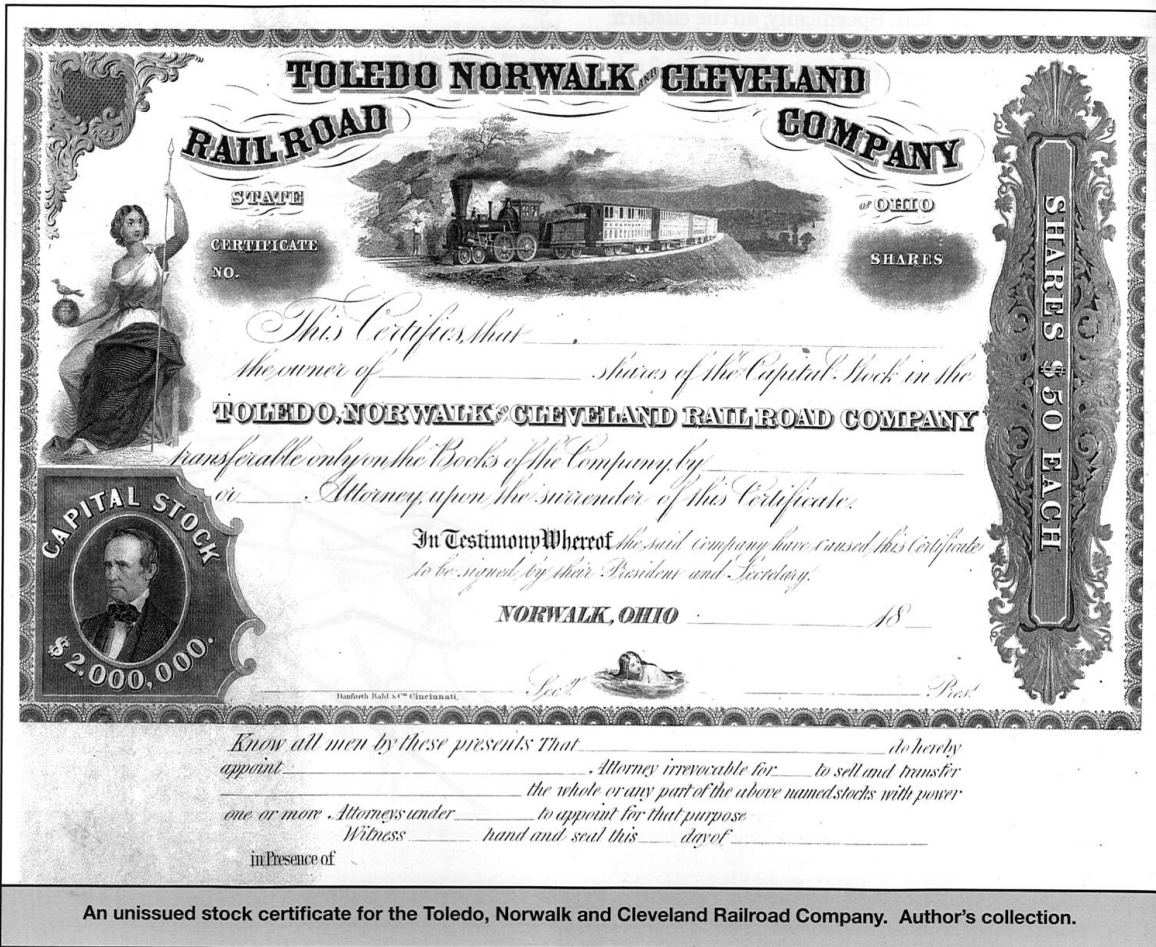
Columbus and Xenia at the time and was experienced at both fundraising and construction, assumed the presidency. Needing to save the charter, Kelly, along with a Mr. Handy, the treasurer, a Mr. Sargent, the engineer, and others broke ground by filling a few wheelbarrows with earth and then emptying them a short distance away. They were soon superseded by one lone individual with a shovel and a wheelbarrow who spent the better part of the fall and winter of 1847 spading his way towards Columbus. When he threw in the shovel, another was found to carry forth the enterprise.

Hoping to push things along a little more expeditiously, the directors assembled enough cash to actually construct a line through Wellington and Shelby to Galion. The first train departed for Cleveland from Wellington on July 1, 1850, leaving at 6 a.m. and arriving at 8:30, averaging a little over 14 miles an hour on the 4-foot, 10-inch gauge strap rail. At such a velocity, the passengers barely had time to glimpse Grafton, Olm-

sted, and Berea as they flew past. Regardless, a grand time was had by all. Regular service then commenced, with one train a day operating in each direction.

Once operational, the CC&C, because of four very valuable assets, became the belle of the ball for those seeking to build from Cleveland to Toledo. First, as mentioned above, its charter allowed it to connect with virtually any other railroad. Second, it had a terminal at the lakefront in downtown Cleveland on the east side of the Cuyahoga River. Third, it had a bridge over the Cuyahoga River directly south of downtown and another over the Rocky River at the upper falls at Berea. Finally, it had actual track down and was operational. Anyone building east from Toledo inland from the lake would be able to cut costs substantially by connecting to the CC&C west of Berea, thereby saving both the cost of building into Cleveland and on the actual mileage constructed.

Determined to seize upon this advantage, another new set of players, mainly from Norwalk, threw their



hat into the ring. On March 7, 1850, the Ohio General Assembly passed the incorporation act for the Toledo, Norwalk & Cleveland Railroad (TN&C). Six individuals from Norwalk and Huron County, including Timothy Baker, Charles Boalt and John Gardener, six from Fremont (Sandusky County) and five from Toledo (Lucas County) were listed on the incorporation papers.

The road was organized under a February 11, 1848 law which regulated railroads and allowed them the right to survey routes and appropriate land for construction. Capital stock was to be two million dollars.

The company was authorized to construct a railroad from Toledo in Lucas County through Norwalk that would connect to the CC&C at Wellington in Lorain County or at some other point in Huron County or Lorain County to be decided upon later.

The documents also spelled out the conditions under which public money could be invested in the railroad. Commissioners of any county through which the railroad passed in whole or in part might subscribe to a maximum of \$100,000 of the capital stock of the railroad. To raise the money to purchase the stock, they were authorized to pay any rate of interest on the borrowed money up to 7% per annum, payable semi-annually in advance. They were also authorized to issue any bonds, notes, or paper necessary to properly secure the debt. To service this debt, they were authorized to levy taxes and to use dividends. The corporations would issue the bonds and use the proceeds to buy stock in the railroad. The debt was an obligation for the corporations, not the railroad, and the taxpayers were responsible for the payment of principle and interest.

Before the commissioners could make any such commitment, the qualified voters of the county had to vote. The voting was to be carried out according to an act of February 28, 1846 in which it was stipulated that the commissioners had to give at least twenty days' notice in one or more newspapers in general circulation to qualified voters. Voting was to take place at the next annual election. The subscription could be placed only if the majority of qualified voters voted in favor of the subscription.

The TN&C would pass through several towns and counties, all potential sources of funding. The main towns were Grafton, Oberlin, and Wakeman to the east of Norwalk; and Monroeville, Bellevue, Clyde, Fremont, and finally Toledo to the west. The six counties it would pass through, Lorain, Huron, Sandusky, Ottawa, Wood, and Lucas, could also be tapped for funds.

With the charter in hand, the men pushing the TN&C wasted no time in moving ahead. Charles L. Boalt was elected president and financial manager of the road. He immediately raised \$25,000 from individual subscribers in Fremont and then arranged for a

vote on a \$100,000 subscription from Sandusky County to be held at the general election of October 8, 1850. On that day, the voters spoke, and the authorization went down in defeat for two main reasons. First, the rotting pilings and the worthless currency left from the Ohio Railroad fed the not unreasonable suspicions that this new scheme was no better than the old one, and the results would be the same. So despite the crying need for better transportation, many resisted the siren call of the steam whistle. Second, the proposed railroad would not benefit the northern townships of Sandusky County or Woodville Township in the west. Since they would receive no benefit, the citizens of these townships voted heavily against it.

While this could have been the end, Boalt and others returned to the legislature to request that a new vote be held on a \$50,000 subscription which would exempt the citizens of Woodville and Townsend townships from being forced to pay for the subscription. The Assembly passed this new authorization on January 20, 1851, and on March 4, 1851 the commissioners authorized a vote on a new subscription for \$50,000 set for the first Monday in April. Despite still being a hard sell, this time the issue passed handily.

In the middle of April, the commissioners ordered the stock to be subscribed. To pay for it they ordered that two series of 7% bonds be issued. The first comprised forty \$1,000 bonds, while the second comprised one hundred \$100 bonds. To safeguard the county from loss, they demanded and received a bond backed by prominent citizens sufficient to cover all loss up to the \$100,000. When backers were found for this bond, the stock was finally issued two days later.

Roughly the same events occurred in Huron County, where Norwalk is located. The initial question of subscription for \$100,000 backed by the entire county was submitted to voters in the fall of 1850 and went down to defeat for the same reason as the Sandusky County vote failed. The line would only benefit the northern tier of townships, so the remainder of the county, seeing no benefit to them, overwhelmingly voted against it, causing it to fail. A new vote was secured on a reduced subscription of \$50,000, and this passed easily in April 1851.

These two measures raised \$100,000 in funds for the endeavor. A similar measure passed in Russia Township in Lorain County, adding \$10,000 more. With \$216,000 in funds secured from other sources, mainly individuals and the city of Toledo, the total available was over \$320,000, which was sufficient to begin construction. With contracts already having been let in anticipation, the TN&C was poised to forge the last link in the great chain of railroads from New York City to Chicago.