



The Short North Railroad Service Comes to Columbus and The Rise of Union Station

Historical Context and Overview

By the 1840s, railroads were replacing canals as the primary means of long-distance transportation of people and products. Early trains could travel up to twenty miles per hour, about five times faster than canal boats. Columbus entrepreneur William Dennison chartered the Columbus and Xenia Railroad in 1844. Six years later, the Columbus and Xenia Railroad brought the first passenger train to Columbus. To serve railroad traffic, the Columbus and Xenia Railroad and the Cleveland, Columbus and Cincinnati Railroad acquired an eighteen-acre site north of Naghten Street and east of High Street for the construction of the first Union Station in 1851. The second Union Station was completed on February 14, 1875.

Railroad transportation brought thousands of immigrants and new industries to urban areas. By the late 19th and early 20th centuries, industrial pollution and overcrowding had made cities undesirable places to live. In response, progressive city leaders started the City Beautiful Movement, a reform movement in architecture and city planning. City Beautiful leaders believed creating a beautiful city would inspire its residents to morality and civic virtue. The first major showcase of the City Beautiful Movement was in Chicago during the 1893 World Columbian Exposition, directed by architect Daniel Burnham. In 1897, Daniel Burnham came to Columbus and designed the third Union Station in Beaux-Arts Classical style.

Standards Alignment

Ohio's New Learning Standards: K-12 Social Studies

Grade 3, Content Statement 3: Local communities change over time.

Grade 3, Content Statement 7: Systems of transportation and communication move people, products and ideas from place to place.

Grade 3, Content Statement 10: Individuals make the community a better place by solving problems in a way that promotes the common good.

Grade 4, Content Statement 1: The order of significant events in Ohio and the United States can be shown on a timeline.

Grade 4, Content Statement 14: Ohio's location and its transportation systems continue to influence the movement of people, products and ideas in the United States.

Grade 8, Content Statement 15: The movement of people, products and ideas resulted in new patterns of settlement and land use that influenced the political and economic development of the United States.

Grade 8, Content Statement 22: Choices made by individuals, businesses and governments have both present and future consequences.

HS American History, Content Statement 10: The rise of corporations, heavy industry, mechanized farming and technological innovations transformed the American economy from an agrarian to an increasingly urban industrial society.

HS American History, Content Statement 14: The Progressive era was an effort to address the ills of American society stemming from industrial capitalism, urbanization and political corruption.

Learning Objectives

- Explain how the means of transportation in Columbus changed through the years and how this affected the development of the High Street/Short North area.
- Explain how the railroad contributed to the development of the city of Columbus.
- Describe the short-term and long-term effects, both positive and negative, of the railroad on Columbus.
- Compare the development of the railroad in Columbus to similar developments in the nation.
- Explain the relationship between the construction of the third Union Station and the City Beautiful Movement.

Discussion Questions

1. How did the development of the railroad in Columbus affect the economy? What new businesses and industries emerged in Columbus during this period?
2. How did the development of the railroad in Columbus affect the movement of people within the city?
3. How did the physical appearance of Columbus change as a result of the railroad?
4. What were some long-term positive effects of the railroad? Do any of these still affect us today?
5. The railroad provided additional opportunity for the development of industry in Columbus. How did this industrial development affect Columbus? Give some specific examples.
6. How did the construction of the third Union Station reflect the goals of the City Beautiful Movement?
7. Compare the effects of railroad development in Columbus to effects of railroads nationwide.

Extension Activities

Have students research one mode of transportation, and develop a project of their choice demonstrating the evolution of that transportation technology. Projects should incorporate timelines, what factors affected the need for the technology and the current status of that particular form of transportation. This project could also include an advertisement for that transportation here in Columbus today.

Have students examine several historic maps of Columbus. These can be found on the Teaching Columbus website at <http://teachingcolumbus.omeka.net/collections/show/14>. Students compare the maps, particularly noting areas of growth and its relation to the railroad, making connections to the points in the video segments.

Investigate the role of the railroad in Columbus today. Where do the trains run? What do they carry? Why are trains still important today? What has been done with railroad tracks that are no longer in use? How does railroad usage in Columbus compare with usage in other areas of the world (e.g. New York City, Washington DC or Europe)?

Compare the development of transportation routes over time. Do roads follow the old Native American trails? Did railroads try to follow roads? What roads exist in current Franklin County/Ohio that were built on the oldest roads or trails?

Additional Resources

Columbus Railroads - www.columbusrailroads.com

Columbus Ohio Union Station - home.roadrunner.com/~unionstation/

Ohio Historical Maps - <http://library.osu.edu/find/subjects/maps/ohio-historical-maps/>

Historic Railroad Structures and Rail-Served Industries -
<http://rrstructuresandindustries.org/columbus/>

Historic Transportation Maps - <http://railsandtrails.com/Maps/>

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