



BICENTENNIAL BULLETIN No. 40 ***—Sheffield Celebrates 200th Birthday***

The Sheffield Bicentennial Commission will issue a *Bicentennial Bulletin* each Monday throughout 2015 that illustrates the rich heritage of our communities. ***View them at — www.sheffieldbicentennial.org or sheffieldvillage.com***

LAKE ERIE & PITTSBURGH RAILROAD—Sheffield's ghost railroad

The Lake Erie & Pittsburgh Railroad (LE&P) was formed in July 1903 to build a rail line from Lorain to Youngstown and eventually on to Pittsburgh. The 105-mile projected route ran in a direct line between Lorain and Youngstown, passing through Berea and Ravenna. It was not intended as a passenger route, its clear purpose was to form a direct link between lake industries and the coal reserves of the Mahoning and Ohio valleys. The section between Berea and Ravenna appears to have been completed early on, but the portion in Lorain County was not completed until 1917, in conjunction with the new Cromwell steel mill.

After passing over French Creek and Colorado Avenue in a northwesterly direction, the tracks arced to the west, crossing Lake Breeze Road about 0.4 mile north of the Colorado Avenue intersection. Continuing westward for another 0.7 mile, the LE&P connected with a north-south spur owned by the Cromwell Steel Company that ran about a mile into the plant. The Cromwell spur also extended another 0.7 mile to the north of the LE&P connection where another connection was made with the Nickel Plate Road (NKP). To the southeast of the French Creek crossing, the LE&P made connection with the South Lorain Yard of NKP, located just south of French Creek Road.

This portion of the LE&P line, from Cromwell Steel Company to the NKP connections, is recorded as being active during the period 1917 to 1928. Now all has disappeared except for a slight grade shown on topographic maps and old bridge piers in the valley of French Creek.

Lake Erie & Pittsburgh Railroad trestle over Mill Creek in Cuyahoga County, Ohio (circa 1920); this trestle-type bridge is composed of a number of short spans supported by frames; each supporting frame referred to as a bent



When the LE&P trestle and track was planned in 1916, it cut across the northeast corner of the James Day Farm, then managed by Andrew and Emma Conrad. The Conrad family had been operating the farm for the Day family for 15 years when the railroad was built. Way back in 1904, the heirs of James Day had sold some seven acres of land to the LE&P for \$6,500 and now the Conrads would have to accommodate the rail line. The old barn was in the right-of-way and a new one would have to be built. Emma was worried that the disturbance would stop her hens from laying eggs. Even the outhouse had to be moved. The Day family had a new kitchen wing built on the house to make Emma's life easier. Andrew learned that the primary purpose for the rail line was to carry coal to the Cromwell plant.

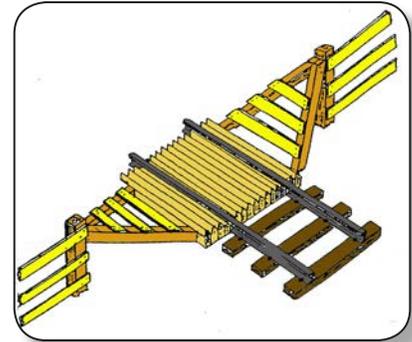
The trestle over French Creek was constructed of wood beams delivered to the edge of the valley by rail car. The trestle was completed in April 1917 and was still standing in the 1930s. The workers had their living quarters in a boxcar that moved along as the track was completed. A 100-foot-wide swath of trees was cut along the right-of-way. It was all hand labor as the workers mounded up the roadbed that would carry the rails west. When the tracks crossed Colorado Avenue (then called Conrad Road), wooden cattle gratings were installed to keep animals from straying onto the right-of-way. Because of their cleft hooves, cows and sheep are prevented from walking on the slanted boards of the grating.

With the nation being at war, steel rails were in short supply, thus once the spur was completed from the NKP yard to the Cromwell plant, there was a halt in the railroad's further progress to the southeast. Newspaper articles at the time reported plans to continue the railroad's construction to Berea. Grade work was completed in Sheffield and Avon, but rails were never laid. Eventually the right-of-way southeast of Sheffield was sold to the Ohio Edison Company to carry electric transmission lines.

Lake Erie & Pittsburgh Railroad trestle over French Creek on the James Day farm in April 1917



Type of cattle grating used by the Lake Erie & Pittsburgh Railroad to prevent livestock from straying onto the right-of-way



Foundation pier and bluff abutment for the Lake Erie & Pittsburgh Railroad trestle over French Creek in the French Creek Nature Reserve, Sheffield Village (2010)

