



BICENTENNIAL BULLETIN No. 51 **—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**

LORAIN & WEST VIRGINIA RAILROAD (only Ohio railroad entirely in one county) *Sheffield Village & Sheffield Township, Ohio*

This rail line, known as the Lorain & West Virginia Railroad (L&WV), was built by the Wheeling & Lake Erie Railway (W&LE) to connect its mainline tracks in Wellington, Ohio to the steel mills on the Black River in Lorain. The 25-mile-long line was completed in 1907 and operated as a separate company. The line remains the only railroad built in Ohio entirely within one county.

Just north of Garfield Bridge (SR 254), the Lorain & West Virginia Railway Company constructed an impressive, high-level trestle over the Black River in 1906 to service the burgeoning steel mills in Lorain with coal from the Ohio valley. At the same time, the railroad purchased land between East River Road and Abbe Road for the location of the tracks, a small yard of multiple tracks, and a roundhouse. The roundhouse appears to have had several bays [stalls] with individual tracks leading to them.

The roundhouse was located in the center of a wye—a triangular or “Y” shaped track arrangement used to reverse the direction of the engine. After crossing the Black River and passing by the wye, the tracks turned northeast for 1.5 miles, then west into the marshaling yard south of French Creek Road. The roundhouse and switching yard were abandoned in the 1930s and the trestle and mainline tracks were taken out of service in the 1960s. Remnants of the roundhouse foundation and rail tracks are still visible at the northern flank of North Ridge [Detroit Road] in Sheffield Village.

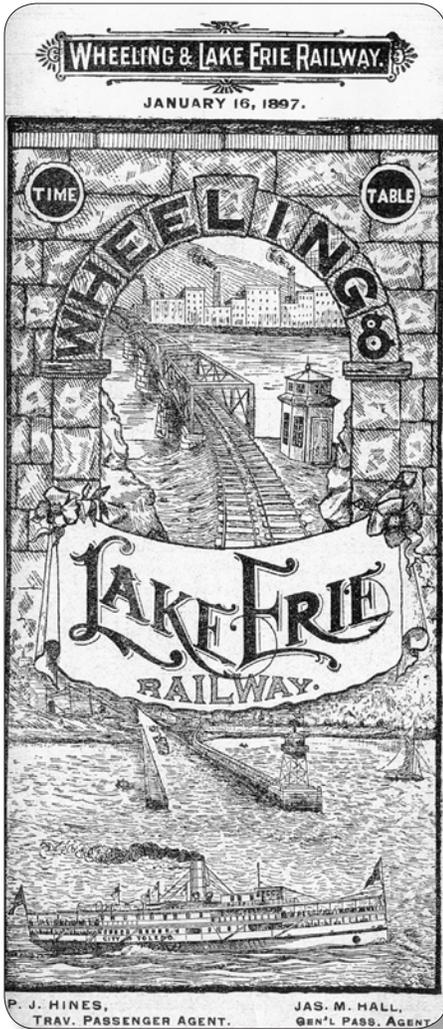
Some service began in 1906 and consisted primarily of coal shipments to the communities of Amherst, Oberlin and Lorain. In 1907 service was completed to the steel mills of the National Tube Company on the Black River, the line’s prime customer. The Wheeling & Lake Erie Railway (W&LE)

Lorain & West Virginia Railroad steam locomotive crossing the Black River trestle in Sheffield Village, circa 1934



was acquired by the New York, Chicago and St. Louis Railroad [Nickel Plate Road] in 1948, resulting in a decline in traffic on the Lorain & West Virginia Railway. Service was further cut back in 1963 when the line was acquired by the Norfolk and Western Railroad (N&W). A flood that washed out a bridge near Wellington in 1969 was the final blow — Nickel Plate decided the line was not profitable enough to rebuild the bridge and the track was abandoned. A portion of the line is currently owned by the Lake Shore Railway Association with hopes of rebuilding the line for passenger excursions.

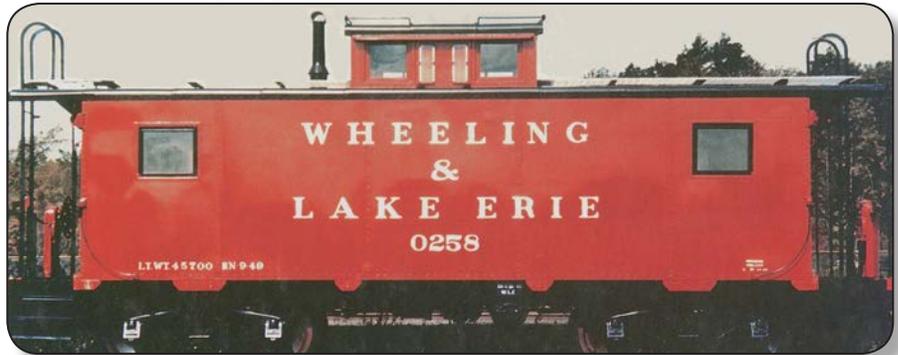
*Wheeling & Lake Erie Railway
Time Table for 1897*



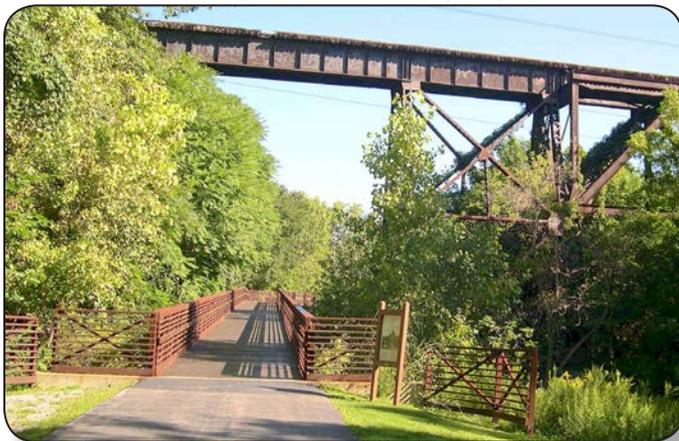
Lorain & West Virginia Railroad Mallet-type locomotive on the Black River trestle in Sheffield Village, carrying coal to the Lorain steel mills, 1948



Wheeling & Lake Erie Railway steel cabooses, constructed in 1949; cabooses were used on every freight train until the 1980s when safety laws were relaxed



Abandoned Lorain & West Virginia Railroad trestle from Lorain County Metro Park's Bridgeway Trail, 2005



Abandoned Lorain & West Virginia Railroad tracks and water tower foundation in Sheffield Village, December 2003

