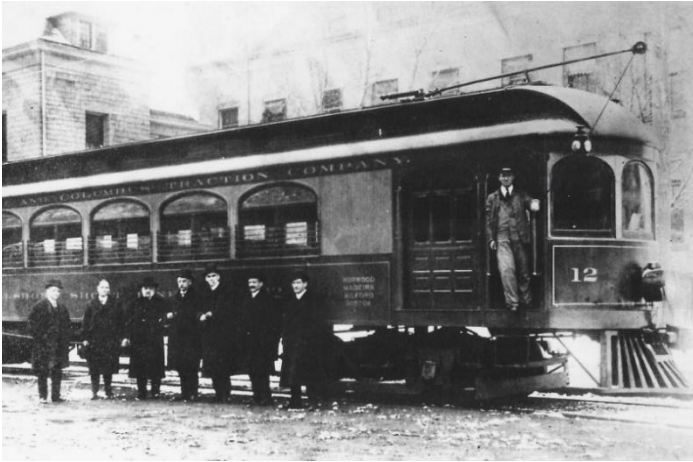


Swinging on the Swing Line: by Carol (Klenk) Heck



Pretend it's 1906 and you want to commute to work outside of Madeira during the week or go to a show in downtown Cincinnati on the weekend. One of the best options for travel is to make use of the new Cincinnati & Columbus Traction Company electric train line. The other alternatives are the noisy, sooty steam trains that are not able to run when you want them, or the slow and dusty horse and buggy. And don't forget, when it rains, everything gets very muddy.

The electric train is fast and clean. They have eight Jewette brand passenger cars running back and forth along the line every hour at different points. And they

have several non-powered trailers they can hook behind a car. They also can haul light freight in freight cars.

The electric road that goes through Madeira is nicknamed "The Swing Line"; named after Judge Peter Swing and his two sons, Philip Swing Esq. who is the general manager and Richard Swing Esq. who is a director. However, the company calls itself the "Hillsboro Short Line" or the "Cincinnati and Columbus" and displays that name on their green cars. Some people call it the "Green Line" because of the color.

"The individual cars are divided into three compartments: the 38-person passenger section has rich mahogany with inlaid patterns and plush green upholstery and leather seating; the 16 seat men's smoking section has seats made from rattan; and then there's a baggage section that can accommodate about 12 people, if there's no baggage. There are plate glass windows, some of which are green. The curtains are waterproofed and similar to tent material or awnings. There is a toilet room at the back of each car and heat is generated by a hot water system in the cabin."^{1*}

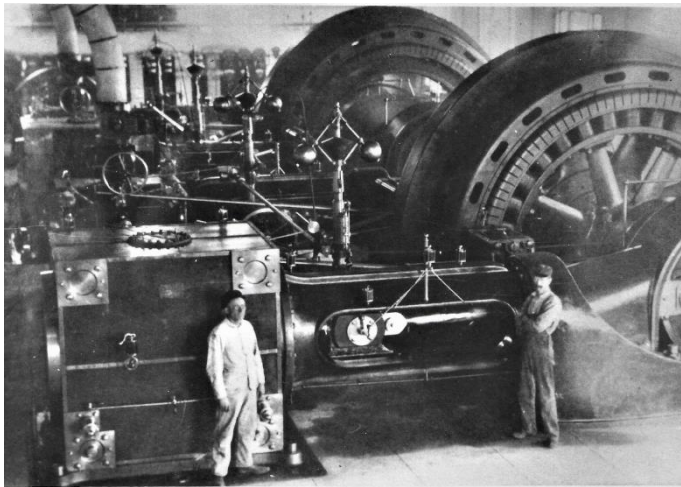
The traction cars can travel about 31 mph. The excursion from Norwood to Hillsboro used to take two days by horse and buggy. Now, in 1906, the trip takes two hours and fifteen minutes with approximately two stops every mile. (Note the two historic postcards. One is of the crossover of the C & C Traction Line and the B & O Railroad, west of the Miami Avenue station, and the other is the long trestle that ran through what is now Sellman Park.)



“Interurban fare is 2 cents per mile or 1.9 cents round trip, 1 cent per mile for commuters and on Sundays, and .75 cents for students. Freight is charged 7-15 cents per CWT (cents per hundredweight), and milk was 2.5 cents per CWT.”^{2*}

Here’s a little more history. “In Ohio, Interurban networking was at its peak by World War I with 2,798 miles of road”^{3*} in the five major cities and all along Lake Erie. Ohio ranked high in the country for the number of traction lines during 1889-1916. The Cincinnati & Columbus started operating in September of 1905. The new bridge over the Little Miami in Milford completed the 53-mile route on April 22, 1906. The section going to Columbus never materialized as originally planned. The C & C used standard gauge track, but the use of different gauges between the nine other Cincinnati interurbans made it impossible for physical interchanges or mergers between roads.

Overhead electrical lines supplied power to the train car through a connector rod. To supply this power, the company built a coal-burning electric-generating plant in Perintown, “(also known as Cahoon in the Electric



Railway Journal)”.^{2*} Shown is a picture inside the Perintown plant. The plant fed four other sub-stations along the route; Madeira was one of the four sub-stations with Owensville, Allensburg, and Hillsboro being the other three. Our sub-station also enabled electric service, for the first time, around 1910, to Madeira residents, and businesses. The electric was shut off at the end of the day when the trains shut down. Madeira’s electricity came from this building until 1920. The traction building still exists at 6912 Miami Ave.



East and west cars ran every hour through Madeira from 6:20 AM to 11:20 PM. There were either stations or sidings at the following: Norwood, Madisonville, Madeira, Ramona Station in Indian Hill (once known as Allendale), Terrace Park, Milford, Perintown, Stonelick, Owensville (once known as Boston), Monterey, Hartman’s, Marathon, Quinn’s, Vera Cruz, Fayetteville, St. Martins, Stringtown, Dodsonville, Allensburg, Fairview, Hoagland, and Hillsboro. In Norwood, one could transfer to other lines as there were numerous lines meeting there.

Frank Woods was the chief engineer in Madeira. His living quarters were above the sub-station on the second floor. He said that after the Madeira station, there was a large trestle to the east, then the road went down Red Bird Hollow, came out near Camp Stepping Stones in Terrace Park, crossed the Little Miami south of Milford Bridge, went through Milford on High Street to route 50 and so on. He mentioned a stop at Logtown.

By world war I the gasoline engine was becoming a necessity and after the war, many families wanted an automobile. It is reported that the “first person to purchase a car in Madeira was Homer Martindale in 1912”.^{4*}

The growing number of auto and truck owners demanded better roads. As the state built the roads, the electric interurbans weren’t used as often.



The bridge over the Little Miami River in Milford, seen above, was destroyed twice, once in the flood of 1907, just a year after completion and again in 1913. "The bridge was replaced in 1907 with a second-hand bridge bought from The Cincinnati, Hamilton and Dayton Railroad."^{5*} When the 1913 flood took out the steel center support, passengers were stranded, but all got home safely. The bridge was repaired, but financially the company never recovered.

Eventually, the roadbed became washed out and soft, making the ride dangerously rough. Someone thought the name Swing Line came from the motion you felt in the back of the car. Sharp turns or steep grades led to fatal accidents that shook the passengers' trust. In 1918, there was a head-on collision in Madeira. The traction road paralleled the B & O at a point known as Dead Man's Curve, south of Madeira, east of Madisonville. A passenger traction car collided with a traction freight car killing one motorman, George Franke. Everyone else suffered injuries.

Funding and construction were contagious in the beginning. Entrepreneurs got the fever and had big dreams. Steam train roads didn't take kindly to the interurbans stealing some of their business and made cross-overs, like bridges and trestles, the financial responsibility of the interurbans. The passengers and farmers enjoyed the ease of use for traveling, and shipping goods like fresh milk, produce and livestock. However, in the end, the C & C couldn't recoup from the cost of doing business.

The life of the interurban was short-lived. Many people fought to keep the Swing Line. Financial plans were in place and court cases were abundant throughout. In the end, it was deemed too expensive to maintain and ridership was diminishing. The C & C was abandoned on December 31, 1919, making it last only 14 years. Now only remnants remain as our lifestyle constantly changes.

¹ Cincinnati and Columbus Traction Co. Hillsboro Short Line; The Swing Line, by David McNeil, 1996.

² The Cincinnati and Columbus Traction Company essay by Bill Van Doren, 1962.

³ Interurban! article by H. Roger Grant, published in Timeline April/May 1986.

⁴ Madeira Milestones, by Frank Bostwick, 1985.

⁵ The Cincinnati & Columbus Traction Co. article by David McNeil on the Clermont County Historical Society website.

Photos courtesy of Madeira Historical Society and Cincinnati and Columbus Traction Co. by David McNeil
Originally written April 2022

Also see "Madeira Electrified" and "Madeira Tragedies People Helping People"