

The New York Central Railroad Cleveland Division Piney Fork Branch

The late 19th century was an active period in Ohio's early railroad history.



Through several incorporations, foreclosures, reorganizations, and consolidations a narrow gauge railroad line from near Youngstown, OH, was extended to Alliance, OH. This line was converted to standard gauge and extended to Bergholz, OH, by 1880. The Lake Erie, Alliance & Wheeling was incorporated in 1901

and the line was extended to Dillonvale, OH, by the next year. This line was profitable due to its coal resources and was acquired by the Lake Shore & Michigan Southern Railway Co. in 1902 during its expansion along the southern shore of Lake Erie. The New York Central and Hudson River Railroad merged with the LS&MS in 1914 to form the New York Central System.

The industrial needs for coal during WWI allowed for improvements to the line with the creation of a hump yard and scales at Minerva, OH, in 1917. This line transported coal



from mostly strip mine fed tipples into the 1960's. The last two mines ceased regular operations in the late 1970's and the line was sold to Ohi-Rail in 1982.



My modeling efforts have been to recreate the line from my hometown of Minerva, OH, south to the termination at Dillonvale, OH, in the middle to late 1960s. I used my “modeler’s license” to extend the line geographically south to St Clairsville, OH, and then into south staging representing the southern junction meeting the Toledo & Ohio Central line near Corning, OH, between

Columbus and Gallipolis, OH, to justify more through freight traffic. My HO scale basement railroad occupies approximately 420 sq. ft. which is built on three levels. The single track mainline stretches 260 ft between staging yards. I have chosen to maintain the mining activity from various tipples although their activity may have ceased prior to my modeled time period. The yard at Minerva dispatches four mine runs and a local serving industry to towns south of Minerva. The yard at Piney Fork is another point from which a local departs to Dillonvale. In the town of St. Clairsville I have created industry including a steel mill. Through freights make pick ups and set outs at Minerva, Piney Fork, and St. Clairsville. Other through freights may run over the railroad as time permits. The railroad operates with a Dispatcher, a yard master at Minerva, a full time switching job at St. Clairsville, and four road engineers. Car cards are used to direct movements following a sequenced itinerary. Control of the layout is with radio Digitrax DCC. Some locomotives are sound equipped. I run four axle diesels for routine power but a few steam engines are kept on the property for nostalgia. Scenery is just beginning and is only 15% completed.