



Interurbans

At the turn of the century, working and vacationing Ohioans used the largest electrified rail system in the United States, called interurbans, a transportation system that extended 2,798 miles by 1916. They were called interurbans because they ran between cities or urban areas. This was a time before reliable paved roads, cars and trucks and people often traveled by horse and carriage along roads that could be muddy or filled with holes. In other words, traveling by interurban was often faster and easier.

Ohio and Indiana had many interurban lines. In 1889, the world's first interurban line started running from Granville to Newark, Ohio. Service from Westerville to Columbus began in 1895, the same year the nation's first long distance interurban line opened between Cleveland and Akron. Columbus' nine interurban lines extended 767 miles and reached to St. Louis, Missouri; Milwaukee, Wisconsin; and Buffalo, New York in addition to other interstate destinations.

Columbus businessman, Dr. Samuel Hartman, had his own private line that ran from Columbus to his farm called the Ohio & Southern Traction company. Many people used interurban to travel to vacation spots like Buckeye Lake, Minerva Park and as far away as Lake Erie.

Competition from automobiles, buses and trucks, high maintenance costs and reduced usage eventually doomed the interurbans. Passenger trips to Columbus ended in 1938. The final Ohio interurban system which ran between Martin's Ferry and Bridgeport and in the Youngstown area ended in 1948.

Sources

Columbus Railroads www.columbusrailroads.com