

The History of the Pennsylvania Railroads

Written by Kenny Lee

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The Pennsylvania Railroad's four-track main line east of Pittsburgh is one of the most famous and most photographed railroads in North America. Less well known but fascinating railroad "Lines West" main lines from Pittsburgh to Chicago and St. Louis. PRR's Eastern Division railroad between Pittsburgh and Crestline, OH begins around giant Conway Yard northwest of Pittsburgh and extends to Alliance, OH where nearly all trains turn north toward Cleveland and the former NYC mainline.

These 60 miles of railroad, even in the modern era, give a wonderful sampling of the PRR west of Pittsburgh. Physical plant ranging from heavy-duty four-track to the classic Lines West double-track. Topography both hilly and flat and more freight traffic on this segment than even in the PRR days. The appeal of this stretch of the PRR has long been heightened by the fact that nearly all the remainder of the railroad west of Pittsburgh has been chopped to pieces. Much of it has been reduced to semi-local operations or simply gone.

Jumping into the future you will see a number of railroads around the country are giving the new diesel genset engine a chance to prove if it has a place with some railroads. Bunge North America has purchased 4 of these, and they will be using a pair of these in British Columbia. The Terminal Railroad Association of St. Louis had a demonstrator on the property earlier this year. The Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority bought two in March and put one in an engine house until the New England Railroad Club had a chance to look it over at their monthly meeting. Others have been sold around the country.

Diesel genset engines are made by National Railway Equipment and utilize an interesting concept for saving fuel. In each engine they use either one, two, or three smaller diesel prime movers each equipped with its own generator. These individual prime movers can be cut in as needed depending on the load on the engine. The engine has a sophisticated control system that maximizes fuel efficiency by running the engine at 700 horsepower, 1400 horsepower, or 2100 horsepower depending on the load, only using as many prime movers as necessary. National Railway Equipment has an interesting product that may fit with a lot of railroads and save on oil.

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