

**A GENERAL CHRONOLOGY  
OF THE  
PENNSYLVANIA RAILROAD COMPANY  
ITS PREDECESSORS AND SUCCESSORS  
AND  
ITS HISTORICAL CONTEXT**

**By Christopher T. Baer**

**1825**

**April 2005 Edition**

- Jan. 4, 1825      Nicholas Biddle writes to Stephen Duncan of Pennsylvania State Senate in favor of a complete railroad between Philadelphia and Pittsburgh. (Rubin)
- Jan. 1825      Locomotive speed and power trials held at the Killingworth and Hetton railways near Newcastle by leading British engineers, including Charles Sylvester, George Stephenson, John U. Rastrick, James Walker, and Nicholas Wood. (Dilts)
- Jan. 24, 1825      Pennsylvania Improvement Society organizes public meeting at Court House with Chief Justice William Tilghman (1756-1827) as Pres. and Nicholas Biddle as Secretary to support canal between Susquehanna and Allegheny Rivers; Mathew Carey urges also include route between Allegheny River and Lake Erie; Charles J. Ingersoll (1782-1862) proposes examining option of railroads; appoints committee of 24 to prepare memorial to Legislature. (Bishop, Scharf - say Carey & Ingersoll motions came at meeting earlier in Jan.)
- Jan. 25, 1825      Article appears in *United States Gazette* showing relative decline of trade of Philadelphia vs. New York and Baltimore. (USG)
- Jan. 31, 1825      Maryland incorporates Chesapeake & Ohio Canal Company, recognizing Virginia charter. (PL)
- Feb. 2, 1825      Commissioners James Clarke and Jacob Holgate make majority report favoring canal with 4-mile summit tunnel through Allegheny Mountain; estimate cost at \$3 million, including \$480,000 for tunnel. (Rept)
- Feb. 4, 1825      On basis of engineers' reports, Ohio authorizes construction of a canal between Lake Erie and the Ohio River via the Muskingum and Scioto Rivers (later finalized as Cleveland-Portsmouth) and a separate canal between Cincinnati and Dayton; permanently establishes seven-man Board

of Canal Commission appointed by Legislature and creates Board of Canal Fund Commissioners to borrow money; routes chosen are a compromise to serve the most-settled areas and lack of water on Scioto-Miami summit to permit a Cleveland-Cincinnati canal; Alfred Kelley and Micajah T. Williams are later named Acting Commissioners, David S. Bates Principal Engineer and Samuel Forrer and William H. Price Resident Engineers; Nathan S. Roberts is obtained to direct surveys between Cleveland and Coshocton. (McClelland)

- Feb. 5, 1825 Pennsylvania Senate appoints committee of Senators Burnside, Duncan, Knight, Kelton and Garber to inquire into feasibility of building a railroad between Philadelphia and Pittsburgh.
- Feb. 7, 1825 Meeting at Bellefonte protests that only one route (Juniata-Conemaugh) has been examined and calls for other surveys. (Rubin)
- Feb. 9, 1825 Philadelphia, Dover & Norfolk Transportation Company incorporated in Delaware by John M. Clayton (1796-1856), et al., to operate through line of steamers with a stage portage between Dona Landing, near Dover, and Seaford, Del., with boat connection to Norfolk. (PL)
- Feb. 9, 1825 U.S. House decides presidential election in favor of John Quincy Adams after Henry Clay throws his votes to Adams and induces Kentucky to switch from Jackson to Adams. (EAH)
- Feb. 1825 Pennsylvania Improvement Society publishes digest of a report on railroads by British engineer Robert Stephenson. (Rubin)
- Feb. 14, 1825 Pres. Monroe submits first report of U.S. Board of Engineers to Congress (Rept); makes first preliminary report on survey for Chesapeake & Ohio Canal; claims sufficient water on Allegheny Summit. (Ward, Rubin)
- Feb. 18, 1825 Canal vs. railroad debate begins in pages of Philadelphia *United States Gazette*. (Rubin)
- Feb. 21, 1825 Charles Trezinyulney makes minority report skeptical of canal route and tunnel and calling for more exact examination. (CC)
- Feb. 25, 1825 Pennsylvania Improvement Society holds first post-report meeting; resolves to send William Strickland (1787-1854), an architect and engineer trained by Benjamin Henry Latrobe, to England to examine roads, canals, and railroads; also appoints committee to prepare a pamphlet urging immediate construction of link to West. (Bishop, Rubin)
- Feb. 28, 1825 Pennsylvania House Committee on Inland Navigation & Internal Improvement reports recommends further canal surveys but also considers

- possibility of railroads. (Rubin)
- Mar. 3, 1825 Congress subscribes \$300,000 to Chesapeake & Delaware Canal; first federal subscription to a private internal improvement company. (Gray)
- Mar. 3, 1825 Act of Congress assents to charter of Chesapeake & Ohio Canal. (Sanderlin)
- Mar. 3, 1825 Act of Congress authorizes extending the National Road to the capital of Missouri (St. Louis). (Rept)
- Mar. 3, 1825 Conestoga Navigation Company incorporated to improve Conestoga Creek with locks and dams (PL); Simeon Guilford, Engineer; Edward F. Gay construction engineer.
- Mar. 15, 1825 *Internal Improvement. Rail Roads, Canals, Bridges, etc.*, an anonymous pamphlet probably written by George Washington Smith (1800-1876) is published in Philadelphia favoring the construction of railroads over canals. (Rubin)
- Mar. 20, 1825 William Strickland and assistant Samuel Honeyman Kneass (1806-1858) sail for England. (Rubin)
- Mar. 22, 1825 Acting Committee of Pennsylvania Improvement Society issues article in *United States Gazette* in which it appears open to either canal or railroad but sets main objective as concentrating all efforts on a single main line. (Rubin)
- Mar. 28, 1825 Pennsylvania appoints commissioners to improve navigation of Susquehanna from Columbia to Northumberland. (check PL)
- Apr. 6, 1825 Pennsylvania imposes a series of restrictions on Delaware & Raritan Canal and its feeder, including that it not lower level of water in Delaware River by more than one inch. (PL)
- Apr. 11, 1825 Commonwealth of Pa. creates permanent five-man Board of Canal Commissioners to serve without compensation other than actual expenses; appropriates \$20,000 to finance surveys for a "navigable communication" to the Ohio River and Lake Erie; surveys are: Philadelphia to Pittsburgh and Erie via Lancaster, West Branch and Allegheny Rivers and also via Juniata and Conemaugh Rivers; Philadelphia to Seneca Lake; Harrisburg down Cumberland Valley to Potomac River; Juniata to Potomac River via Bedford. (PL)
- Apr. 11, 1825 Pennsylvania creates \$150,000 loan to pay for internal improvements. (PL)

- Apr. 12,, 1825 Codorus Navigation Company incorporated in Pa. to improve Codorus Creek with locks and dams up to York. (PL)
- Apr. 20, 1825 New York authorizes construction of Cayuga & Seneca and Oswego Canals to link Erie Canal with Finger Lakes and Lake Ontario.
- Apr. 20, 1825 New York act authorizes survey of road through Southern Tier counties to Lake Erie. (CHTP7)
- Apr. 21, 1825 Gov. John Andrew Shulze appoints Canal Commissioners: Robert M. Patterson (1787-1854) and John Sergeant (1779-1852) of Philadelphia, Dr. William Darlington (1782-1863) of West Chester, David Scott ( - ) of Luzerne, and Albert Gallatin ( - ) of Fayette County. (PaArch)
- Apr. 1825 Board of Engineers for Internal Improvement assigns team to extension of C&O Canal from Pittsburgh to Lake Erie; route adopted is via Beaver River to Ashtabula. (Ward)
- Apr. 30, 1825 Ohio places first \$400,000 canal loan. (Schreiber)
- May 3, 1825 Congress alters route of National Road between Zanesville, Ohio, and Jefferson City, Mo.; route through Columbus, Richmond, Indianapolis, Terre Haute, and Vandalia influences later route of PRR.
- May 6, 1825 Mass meeting in Philadelphia orchestrated by Mathew Carey endorses call for a statewide "Main Line" convention in Harrisburg. (Rubin, Scharf)
- May 9, 1825 Pennsylvania Canal Commissioners hold first meeting; draft letters to Benjamin Wright, James Geddes and Canvass White, three of the best Erie Canal engineers, offering them employment. (CC)
- May 11, 1825 John Stevens first demonstrates a circular cog railroad 660 feet long at Hoboken ferry, N.J.; also a vertical-boilered locomotive of his own design; operated as a demonstration and popular amusement; at speeds up to 12 MPH. (NYPost, Watkins)
- May 16, 1826 Gov. Shulze appoints Abner Lacock (1770-1837) of Beaver as Canal Commissioner to represent western Pennsylvania in place of Albert Gallatin, who refused to serve. (PaArch)
- May 16, 1825 Patowmack Company stockholders accept terms to surrender charter to Chesapeake & Ohio Canal Company; not done for several years. (Rept)
- May 20, 1825 Schuylkill Navigation Company completes combination of canal and slackwater navigation on Schuylkill River between Philadelphia and Mount Carbon, near Pottsville, opening Southern Anthracite Coal Field to seaboard

markets; section across limestone strata at Reading is plagued by leaks and is forced to close. (AR)

- May 23, 1825 Delaware & Raritan Canal Company opens books in New Brunswick; stock is heavily oversubscribed, mostly by wealthy investors from New York City and northern New Jersey. (Thompson)
- June 5, 1825 William Strickland submits first report from Edinburgh; recommends superiority of railroads causing division in ranks of Philadelphia improvement promoters. (Rubin)
- June 7? 1825 Steamboat *Legislator* of New Brunswick Steam Ferry Company blows up in New York Harbor; later repaired. (Lane)
- June 18, 1825 Canal Commissioners appoint surveyor William Wilson of Lycoming County to examine route between West Branch of Susquehanna and Allegheny River via headwaters of Sinnemahoning Creek and Conemaugh River, taking levels and gauging quantity of water in streams. (CC)
- June 18, 1825 Frederick Graff and Davey Bromley report to Union Canal Company of Pennsylvania on site and plan for pumping machine operated by waters of Swatara Creek to lift water from creek into canal. (MB)
- June 24, 1825 Delaware & Raritan Canal Company pays \$100,000 bonus to state of New Jersey.
- July 4, 1825 Governor DeWitt Clinton of New York and Governor Jeremiah Morrow (1771-1852) of Ohio breaks ground for Ohio & Erie Canal at Licking Summit 3 miles southeast of Newark. (McClelland)
- July 4, 1825 Pennsylvania Canal Commissioners elect Philadelphia lawyer John Sergeant as Pres. (CC)
- July 5, 1825 Canal Commissioners appoint Joseph McIlwaine Secretary at \$400 per year; confirm employment of William Wilson and John Mitchell as surveyors; also John Davies of Dauphin on the Juniata-Conemaugh route; use ordinary county land surveyors rather than engineers. (CC)
- July 6, 1825 Delaware & Raritan Canal Company organized at New Brunswick; John N. Simpson, Pres.; James Neilson, Treasurer. (Thompson)
- July 20, 1825 *Facts and Arguments in Favour of Adopting Railways in Preference to Canals in the State of Pennsylvania* published anonymously in Philadelphia; most likely the work of early railroad advocate George Washington Smith. (Rubin)

- July 21, 1825 DeWitt Clinton, Jeremiah Morrow and William Henry Harrison break ground for Miami Canal at Middletown, Ohio. (McClelland)
- July 25, 1825 Canal Commissioners order John Mitchell of Centre County to survey between West Branch of Susquehanna and Allegheny River. (CC)
- Aug. 4, 1825 Three-day state internal improvement convention convenes in Harrisburg with delegates from 46 counties to support state canal system; split between Philadelphia and Pittsburgh representatives, who want canal between those points, and residents off main line, who want branch canals or are opposed to taxation; convention rejects resolution by Charles Jared Ingersoll and William J. Duane that state consider main line and branch railroads. (Rubin)
- Aug. 1825 Benjamin Wright, Canvass White and Ephraim Beach (1783-1857) begin preliminary surveys for Delaware & Raritan Canal. (Thompson)
- Aug. 12, 1825 William Strickland's first report on railroads, dated June 5 from Edinburgh, is published in Philadelphia newspapers; cites railroads as superior to canals; Strickland also procures a working model of a locomotive. (Rubin)
- Aug. 22, 1825 Committee of Harrisburg Convention issues report estimating entire cost of Philadelphia-Pittsburgh canal with wooden locks and summit tunnel at only \$3 million or \$8 million with stone locks; urges relying on Union Canal and building only Susquehanna River to Pittsburgh first. (Rubin)
- Aug. 31, 1825 Canal Commissioners order Abner Lacock to examine Raystown Branch of the Juniata and to have it surveyed by John Davies if it looks promising. (CC)
- Sep. 1, 1825 Canal Commissioners employ Francis W. Rawle (1795-1881) of Clearfield as surveyor for Clearfield Creek-Conemaugh route; also authorize leveling along Susquehanna River north of Juniata, Sinnemahoning Creek and Clearfield Creek. (CC)
- Sep. 5, 1825 Philadelphia *United States Gazette* reprints letter from *Williamsport Gazette* stating that canals are cheaper and more suitable for Pennsylvania than railroads. (Scharf)
- Sep. 1825 Accident at Union Canal tunnel near Lebanon kills four workers. (MB)
- Sep. 19, 1825 Acting Committee of Pennsylvania Improvement Society writes to Strickland noting that his emphasis on railroads is dividing the supporters of internal improvements into railroad or canal partisans and asking for more facts. (Rubin)
- Sep. 24, 1825 Meeting in State House in support of a railroad between Delaware and

Schuylkill Rivers through Northern Liberties. (Scharf)

- Sep. 26, 1825 York & Jersey Steam-Boat Ferry Company fails as a result of expenses from the July 12, 1824 explosion of the *New Jersey* at Jersey City; assigns ferry lease to Swartwout & Company, composed of Samuel Swartwout (1783-1856), David Bayard Ogden (1775-1849), and Cadwallader D. Colden. (HC)
- Sep. 26, 1825 Fearing the growing dispute between canal and railroad advocates with fatally divided the internal improvement movement, Mathew Carey begins a five-month campaign of writing bitterly anti-railroad pamphlets and newspaper columns; publishes first of six anti-railroad pamphlets under pseudonym "Hamilton." (Rubin, CHTP7)
- Sep. 27, 1825 Stockton & Darlington Railway, first mine railroad that is also a common carrier, opens between Stockton and Witton Park Colliery in Durham, U.K.; *Locomotion No. 1* built by George and Robert Stephenson (Robert Stephenson & Co.), becomes first steam locomotive to haul a regular passenger train; William Strickland in attendance. (James, )
- Sep. 27, 1825 Chesapeake & Delaware Canal discharges John Randel, Jr., as contractor after long-running friction between him and Chief Engineer Benjamin Wright; Randel later sues the company for breach of contract as is eventually awarded \$226,886. (Gray)
- Oct. 1, 1825 Defective section of Schuylkill Canal through Reading reopens.
- Oct. 8, 1825 Meeting at Columbia, Pa.,
- Oct. 18, 1825 Editorial in *United States Gazette* states that any delay in beginning Pennsylvania improvements will compound lead enjoyed by New York and Baltimore; implies railroad vs. canal debate must end. (Rubin)
- Oct. 20, 1825 William Strickland replies to Pennsylvania Improvement Society underscoring his opinion on the superiority of railroads over canals, providing locomotives and inclined planes with stationary engines are used. (Rubin)
- Oct. 23, 1825 U.S. Board of Internal Improvement makes report on cost of Eastern Division of Chesapeake & Ohio Canal from Washington to the coal banks; recommends summit crossing between Wills Creek and Casselman's River; claims sufficient water to cross without a tunnel, but also considers portage railroad as alternative. (Rept)
- Oct. 26, 1825 Erie Canal opens between Albany and Buffalo, N.Y.; flotilla of five boats leaves Buffalo for New York

- Oct. 26, 1825 William Wilson and John Mitchell report on surveys made for Pennsylvania Canal Commissioners during summer. (CC)
- Nov. 4, 1825 Erie Canal boats arrive in New York harbor, where Gov. DeWitt Clinton pours a keg of water from Lake Erie into the Atlantic.
- Dec. 6, 1825 Pres. Adams, in first message to Congress, outlines a broad program of Federal activism in building internal improvements, a national university, a national observatory, exploration, and the encouragement of commerce, manufacturing and the arts and sciences; creates immediate reaction from Southern proponents of states rights; opposition to the administration grows, led in part by VP Calhoun; Adams's refusal to remove political enemies or make partisan appointments prevents him from building a strong political base. (EAH)
- Dec. 7, 1825 Gov. Shulze, in annual message, suggests delay in making decision on main line canal pending further information. (PaArch - check whole)
- Dec. 14, 1825 Maryland internal improvement convention held at the Baltimore Exchange; favors two canals, one to join Chesapeake & Ohio Canal at Washington and one from Port Deposit to Middletown to join the Pennsylvania canal system. (Rubin, Vexler)
- Dec. 21, 1825 Erie Canal engineer Holmes Hutchinson (1794-1865) makes report on surveys for improvement of Connecticut River from Hartford to Barnet, Vt. to Connecticut River Company; assistant is Edward F. Gay, a native of Utica, N.Y., who will later play a large role in Pennsylvania canals and railroads. (Rept)
- Dec. 28, 1825 Canal Commissioners engage William Strickland, who has returned to Philadelphia, to examine and evaluate surveys made in summer. (CC)
- Dec. 29, 1825 Col. James Kilbourne publishes first of three letters in Columbus *Ohio State Journal* advocating construction of railroads in place of canals. (Marvin)
- 1825 New York passes "Great Canal Law" authorizing 17 surveys for branch canals.
- 1825 Steamboat *Trenton* built at Hoboken by R.L. & E.A. Stevens for Philadelphia-Trenton service on Union Line; features boilers mounted on guards. (Stanton)
- 1825 Stevens's Delaware River steamboat *Philadelphia* laid up; abandoned in 1827. (Stanton)

- 1825 Delaware & Maryland Steam Navigation Company incorporated in Maryland. (Vexler - verify)
- 1825 Line of sailing packets established between Baltimore, Charleston, Savannah and New Orleans. (Vexler)
- 1825 Washington & Baltimore Turnpike Road completed between Baltimore and District of Columbia line on line of present U.S. Route 1. (Dilts)
- 1825 Patowmack Company bankrupt (verify?)
- 1825 Depression of 1819-1824 lifts in Old Northwest, accompanied by big influx of new settlers.
- 1825 Thomas S. Clarke comes to Pittsburgh to open a branch of Knox, McKee & Co., transporters of Wheeling, under name of McKee, Clarke & Co. (StdHistPitts)
- 1825 Akron, Ohio, laid out by Gen. Simon Perkins of the Canal Fund at the divide between the Great Lakes and the Ohio River.
- 1825 Michigan authorizes Chicago Road from Detroit via Ypsilanti, Coldwater, and Niles.
- 1825 Peoria, Ill., established on the Illinois River on the site of Fort Clark. (OldNW has settled 1819!!)
- 1825 Nicholas Wood (1795-1865), foreman of Killingworth Colliery in England where Stephenson locomotives in use since \_\_ publishes *Practical Treatise on Rail-Roads*. (Dilts)