

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

By Christopher T. Baer

1827

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- Jan. 5, 1827 Baltimore committee reports to a public meeting chaired by Philip E. Thomas (1776-1861) in favor of a large canal to join Pennsylvania canal system at Middletown. (Rept)
- Jan. 10, 1827 Pennsylvania & Ohio Canal Company incorporated in Ohio to link Ohio Canal at Akron with Pennsylvania Canals. (PL)
- Jan. 10, 1827 Representatives of the wool-growing and woolen textile interests, unable to stem cheaper British imports, introduce a bill to raise the tariff on wools to prohibitive level. (EAH)
- Jan. 1827 Canvass White reports on first survey for Juniata Division; estimates cost at \$367,465. (CC)
- Jan. 18, 1827 Jonathan Knight reports to Gen. Alexander Macomb (1748-1831), Chief Engineer, on survey for National Road between Columbus and Indianapolis, plus new location between Zanesville and Columbus via Newark and alternate route via Springfield, Dayton, Eaton and Richmond. (Rept)
- Jan. 23, 1827 Springfield, Ohio, incorporated as a town. (SprngfldDir)
- Jan. 27, 1827 Delaware & Raritan Canal Company votes to distribute assets among shareholders and dissolve; state returns \$100,000 bonus; company has net loss of \$15-20,000. (Thompson)
- Jan. 30, 1827 George T. Olmstead, Canvass White's assistant, presents his final reports on surveys for Portage Railroad and upper Western Division, setting junction of canal and railroad at Johnstown. (CC)
- Feb. 1, 1827 Canal Commissioners review reports of James Geddes on West Branch-Allegheny canal; Canvass White and George T. Olmstead on Portage

Railroad; David B. Douglass on French Creek Feeder; and John Bennet on North Branch Canal. (CC)

- Feb. 5, 1827 Committee from Pittsburgh asks Canal Commissioners to rescind stop order of Sept. 1826 on work below Pine Creek. (HazR)
- Feb. 5, 1827 Maryland act permits C&O Canal to substitute railroad or inclined planes for full canal and tunnel across mountain. (PL)
- Feb. 6, 1827 Canal Commissioners recommend portage railroad over Allegheny Mountain. (CC)
- Feb. 8, 1827 Canal Commissioners order extension of Western Division Canal to Monongahela River under Grant's Hill provided damages are under \$10,000; follows two days of meetings with a Pittsburgh delegation. (CC)
- Feb. 12, 1827 Two dozen Baltimore merchants, concerned over loss of trade to New York and Philadelphia, hold first meeting to discuss a railroad to the West along the line of the National Road at the home of George Brown of the banking house of Alex. Brown & Sons; group is led by Brown and merchants Philip and Evan Thomas. (Scharf, Dilts)
- Feb. 13, 1827 Pennsylvania & Maryland Canal Company incorporated in Maryland to build from Baltimore to Columbia in response to Baltimore committee. (PL)
- Feb. 1827 Stephen H. Long submits report to War Dept. on survey for "National Road" from Washington to Buffalo; recommends possibility of railroad; Route prefigures future Northern Central Railway. (Dilts - 19th Cong. II Rept 105)
- Feb. 1827 Jonathan Knight submits report to War Dept. on extension of National Road from Wheeling to Missouri. (Dilts - 19thCong II repot 74)
- Feb. 19, 1827 Second Baltimore meeting hears report stressing trade of the Ohio Valley rather than the Susquehanna; resolves to build railroad to Wheeling; cost estimated at \$5 million and appoints a committee to obtain charters from Maryland, Pennsylvania and Virginia. (Dilts)
- Feb. 28, 1827 Baltimore & Ohio Railroad Company (B&O) incorporated in Maryland to build from Baltimore to Ohio River as replacement for turnpikes. (Dilts - Gov. not sign til 3/13!?)
- Feb. 28, 1827 Woolens Bill raising tariff on raw and manufactured wool tabled in Senate by tie-breaking vote of VP John C. Calhoun.
- Mar. 2, 1827 First federal land grants to an internal improvement project made to Wabash

& Erie Canal in Indiana; five square miles per mile on each side in an alternating checkerboard pattern, totaling 527,271 acres; similar grant to Illinois & Michigan Canal. (Fatout)

- Mar. 8, 1827 Virginia approves Baltimore & Ohio charter; may not strike Ohio River lower than Little Kanawha River. (PL)
- Mar. 10, 1827 State of Maryland authorizes \$500,000 subscription to Pennsylvania & Maryland Canal. (PL)
- Mar. 14, 1827 Cornerstone of Lock No. 6, Eastern Division at Walnut Street, Harrisburg, known as the "Penn Lock", laid with Masonic ceremonies attended by Gov. Shulze and other public officials. (Donehoo)
- Mar. 20, 1827 Books opened for B&O Railroad; City of Baltimore subscribes for 5,000 shares. (Scharf, Dilts)
- Mar. 29, 1827 Baltimore ordinance provides for election of two B&O directors. (Digest)
- Apr. 9, 1827 Commonwealth of Pennsylvania authorizes construction of Juniata Division of Canal to Lewistown, Western Division from Freeport to Blairsville, Susquehanna Division from Duncans Island to Northumberland, Delaware Division between Bristol and Taylors Ferry, and French Creek Feeder from French Creek to Summit level; calls for survey between Frankstown and Johnstown for portage road or railroad and for all-water like between West Branch and Allegheny Rivers; authorizes issue of \$1 million state bonds; authorizes survey for canal across South Philadelphia from Arsenal to Navy Yard, from the Lehigh to the North Branch, Down both sides of the Susquehanna below Middletown, and from Bristol to Carpenters Point (Port Jervis); also surveys between Susquehanna and Potomac via Conodoguinet, Yellow Breeches and Conocheague Creeks and for railroads from Harrisburg to Chambersburg and Columbia to York and Gettysburg; Canal Commissioners are to reconsider all-canal route but also survey for a railroad between Philadelphia and the Susquehanna River; first surrender for local demands for branch canals; appropriates \$1 million loan. (PL)
- Apr. 1827 In response to convention of Dec. 1826, Pres. Adams appoints James Geddes and Nathan S. Roberts to resurvey C&O Canal east of Cumberland. (Ward)
- Apr. 14, 1827 Pennsylvania incorporates Pennsylvania & Ohio Canal Company to link Pennsylvania and Ohio canal systems via Mahoning Valley. (PL)
- Apr. 14, 1827 Pennsylvania incorporates Shamokin Canal Company to build up Shamokin Creek with feeder railroad to coal mines. (PL)

- Apr. 1827 *Albion*, first steamboat to ascend Allegheny River leaves Pittsburgh for Kittanning. (HistPitts)
- Apr. 16, 1827 Pennsylvania act makes Canal Commissioners serve one-year terms beginning June 1; cuts engineers' salaries to \$2,000 per year effective June 1 and forbids outside consulting, which enables engineers to earn the most from their scarce expertise; Canal Commissioners may appoint Superintendents of construction at \$3 per day. (PL)
- Apr. 23, 1827 B&O Railroad organized by election of first directors. (Dilts)
- Apr. 24, 1827 B&O elects Philip E. Thomas Pres. (Dilts)
- Apr. 25, 1827 Pittsburgh City Councils endorse canal tunnel under Grants Hill. (HazR)
- Apr. 25, 1827 Gen. Alexander Macomb orders Jonathan Knight to resurvey and locate National Road from Indianapolis to St. Louis; also to have an assistant begin securing right-of-way west of Zanesville. (Rept)
- May 2, 1827 Canal Commissioners notify engineers of salary cuts and ban on consulting; Nathan S. Roberts, David B. Douglass and James Geddes refuse to accept terms; William Strickland also refuses but offers to work as unpaid consultant; Simeon Guilford is only engineer to accept; results in a dearth of engineering expertise and many poor designs. (CC)
- May 4, 1827 William Darlington (ex-Federalist) resigns as President of Canal Commission and replaced by David Scott of Wilkes-Barre (Democrat).
- May 5, 1827 Lehigh Coal & Navigation Company opens nine-mile railroad operated by horses and gravity between Summit Hill mines and Mauch Chunk, Pa.; first permanent railroad in Pennsylvania and second of any consequence in U.S.; Solomon White Roberts (1811-1882), who had assisted his uncle Josiah White in the construction, is among the passengers on the first trip. (Hare,)
- May 7, 1827 Canal Commissioner David Scott leaves Harrisburg and tours New York and Connecticut attempting to recruit canal engineers; Canal Commissioners impose salary cuts on assistant engineers; order construction of Grant's Hill tunnel; Acting Commissioner Abner Lacock of Beaver, who wants canal extended down Ohio and up Beaver River, gets authorization to build outlet lock into Allegheny at Allegheny City. (CC)
- May 15, 1827 Canal Commissioners order William Wilson and John Mitchell to survey summits for possible canal between West Branch and Allegheny Rivers via Sinnemahoning, Bennets Branch or Black Lick. (HazR)

- May 1827 Canal Commissioners appoint Nathan S. Roberts Engineer of Western Division Canal with George T. Olmstead and Alonzo Livermore as Assistants; Roberts locates first 20 miles, then transferred to Portage Railroad; Olmstead completes the location, and Livermore revises it adding an 817-foot tunnel through a horseshoe bend and present day Tunnelton. (is this 1826?)
- May 1827 Philadelphia, Dover & Norfolk Steamboat & Transportation Company service extended from Norfolk to Richmond with *Franklin* on Delaware and *Norfolk* and *Philadelphia* on Chesapeake Bay. (Alexander)
- May 1827 Committee of B&O visits Mauch Chunk Railroad. (Dilts)
- May 30, 1827 Board of Engineers for Internal Improvement assigns three surveying parties to B&O Railroad, headed by Capt. Stephen Harriman Long, Capt. William Gibbs McNeill (1801-1853) and William Howard and including Lt. William Cook and Lt. Isaac R. Trimble; all three had done prior work for the C&O Canal or National Road in the same territory. (What source - see below - Dilts gives no date)
- June 1, 1827 Nathan S. Roberts, James Geddes, David B. Douglass and William Strickland leave service of Pennsylvania Canal Commissioners. (CC)
- June 2, 1827 Jonathan Roberts (1771-1854) and James Clarke replace William Darlington and George M. Dallas as Canal Commissioners.
- June 2, 1827 Canal Commissioners hire new, usually less experienced, engineers, mostly from New York canals: DeWitt Clinton, Jr. (1805-1833) on Juniata, James Ferguson (1797-1867) on French Creek-Erie, John Randel, Jr., on North Branch, John Wilson on Philadelphia-Columbia, James D. Harris on Western Division, Henry G. Sargent on Delaware Division, and Charles T. Whippo on Pittsburgh-Beaver-Conneaut Lake lines.
- June 1827 Committee from B&O visits Quincy Railroad. (Dilts)
- June 11, 1827 William Wilson and John Mitchell begin canal surveys between West Branch and Allegheny Rivers. (HazR)
- June 12, 1827 Committee of B&O reports on visits to Quincy Railroad and Mauch Chunk Railroad; cite as proof that railroads are simple enough for Americans to build. (Rept)
- June 1827 Surveys begin between Philadelphia and Susquehanna River via Great Valley and Lancaster under Maj. John Wilson; future PRR Pres. J. Edgar Thomson begins engineering career as rodman at age 19. (late June) (according to Watkins, Thomson was unable to get into West Point, which

- was his first ambition; failing this he wished to join an engineering corps)
- June 20, 1827 Canal Commissioners let first contracts for upper Western Division Canal between Kiski Jct. and Blairsville. (CC)
- June 21, 1827 Canal Commissioners let contract for branch and outlet lock for Western Division Canal at Allegheny City. (CC)
- June 22, 1827 B&O appoints committee to investigate railroads in England. (Dilts)
- June 22, 1827 War Dept. assigns Dr. William Howard (1793-1834), Walter B. Guion, Frederick Harrison, Jr., civil engineers, Col. Stephen Harriman Long and Capt. William Gibbs McNeill of the Topographical Engineers, and Lts. William Cook, Walter Gwynn, Lt. Joshua Barney (1799/00-1867), Isaac Ridgeway Trimble, Richard Edward Hazzard (1803/4-1831), John N. Dillahunty (1800?-1844), and William Beverhout Thompson (1805?-1862) to engineering duty for B&O. (Long)
- June 23, 1827 Since Feb. 28, the following descending traffic passes Harrisburg, most bound for Port Deposit: 631 rafts containing 40.77 Million board feet of timber, 1,370 arks with 11,000 tons anthracite coal and 468,000 bbls. whiskey, and about 300 keelboats with 6,857 tons of wheat and flour. (HazR)
- June 25, 1827 Dr. William Howard reports on survey for canal from Baltimore to Chesapeake & Ohio Canal near Georgetown. (Rubin)
- July 1, 1827 Simeon Guilford reports on survey for Susquehanna Division Canal between mouth of Juniata and Northumberland; estimates cost at \$472,298; Guilford and DeWitt Clinton, Jr., report on lower Juniata Division from mouth of river to Lewistown; estimate \$597,775. (CC)
- July 2, 1827 Canal Commissioners adopt location of Susquehanna Division on west bank and lower Juniata Division. (CC)
- July 2, 1827 Preliminary reconnaissance for B&O begins under Dr. William Howard, Col. S.H. Long and Capt. William G. McNeill, with Frederick Harrison and Lts. Joshua Barney, Isaac R. Trimble and John N. Dillahunty. (Scharf, Long)
- July 4, 1827 First section of Ohio & Erie Canal opens between Cleveland and Akron. (McClelland)
- July 11, 1827 Austin Corbin (1827-1896), future banker and reorganizer of the Long Island Railroad and Pres. of Philadelphia & Reading Railroad, born at Newport, N.H. (WwasW)

- July 13, 1827 Union Canal managers decide to line entire summit level with plank to stop percolation into underlying limestone strata. (HazR)
- July 1827 Surveys begin for B&O; McNeill and Howard are in charge of section from Baltimore to the Potomac. (Dilts)
- July 1827 Lt. Isaac Ridgeway Trimble, a West Point graduate, joins B&O engineer corps on section west of Cumberland via the Cheat and Little Kanawha Rivers; Stephen H. Long has been prostrated by fever on a survey in Alabama and could not join him. (Dilts)
- July 30, 1827 Five-day protectionist convention convenes at Harrisburg, Pa., with delegates from 13 states; calls for minimum valuation principal and tariff levels to protect a wide array of raw materials and manufactured goods, including textiles and iron. (EAH)
- Aug. 1, 1827 Canal Commissioners let first contracts for portion of lower Western Division Canal between Kiski Jct. and Pine Creek. (CC)
- Aug. 3, 1827 Representatives of Baltimore & York Turnpike, Conewago Canal Turnpike and York Haven Company hold convention in Baltimore for improving route between York Haven and Baltimore. (HazR)
- Aug. 15, 1827 Canal Commissioners let first contracts for French Creek Feeder between Bemus's Mill above Meadville and the Conneaut Outlet; this section is totally isolated from other canals but is commenced on the grounds that it is common to both Shenango and Allegheny routes for Pittsburgh-Erie canal. (CC)
- Aug. 20, 1827 Henry G. Sargent reports on survey of Delaware Division Canal to Easton; estimates cost at \$686,596. (CC)
- Aug. 1827 York Haven Company and other Baltimore businessmen authorize George Winchester and General Joseph G. Swift to survey for a railroad between Baltimore and York Haven.
- Aug. 27, 1827 Ground broken for French Creek Feeder at Meadville, Pa.
- Sep. 10, 1827 Canal Commissioners let first contracts for lower Juniata Division Canal from mouth of river to Lewistown. (CC)
- Sep. 20, 1827 John Mitchell reports on surveys for all-canal routes between the West Branch and the Allegheny via Two Lick Creek; William Wilson had reported earlier on survey via Bennetts Branch and Sandy Lick Creek. (CC)

- Sep. 25, 1827 Internal Improvement convention held in Princeton, N.J., for promoting various projects to link New York City with Delaware River; dominated by counties in "waist" of state; agree to meet in Trenton on Nov. 14 and form state internal improvement society. (Thompson)
- Oct. 13, 1827 Canal Commissioners let contracts for first section of Delaware Division Canal from Bristol to Taylor's Ferry. (CC)
- Oct. 29, 1827 Charles T. Whippo of New York begins canal survey from Curwensville to Sinnemahoning _____. (HazR)
- Nov. 5, 1827 Report of first railroad survey between South Amboy and Camden via Hightstown and Mt. Holly made by William Strickland.
- Nov. 5, 1827 New Jersey Assembly Committee on Delaware & Raritan Canal reports in favor of a state canal and introduces a bill "For the Internal Improvement of the State" to carry it out. (Rept, AssyMin)
- Nov. 5 1827 McNeill, Howard and Trimble report to B&O Board on surveys west of Cumberland running to the Little Kanawha and Kanawha Rivers; survey of Shenandoah-Kanawha route was undertaken at request of residents of Kanawha Valley, but state had reserved this route for the [James River Company]. (Dilts)
- Nov. 6, 1827 Petition for railroad from South Amboy to Camden introduced in N.J. Assembly. (AssyMin)
- Nov. 1827 Flood washes out feeder dam on Kiskiminetas; contractors Leech & Truck lose \$3,000. (HazR)
- Nov. 20, 1827 U.S. engineers assigned to B&O survey leave Baltimore on final survey between Baltimore and Potomac River; include Col. Stephen H. Long, Capt. William Gibbs McNeill, Dr. William Howard, and Lts. William Cook, Walter Gwynn, Joshua Barney, Isaac R. Trimble, John N. Dillahunty, John M. Fessenden (1802-1883), Richard Edward Hazzard, William B. Thompson and Mr. Walter B. Guion. (Scharf)
- Nov. 28, 1827 Canal Commissioners contract for canal aqueduct over Allegheny River at Pittsburgh. (HistPitts)
- Nov. 28, 1827 First portion of Miami Canal opens; first three boats leave Howell's Basin on north side of Cincinnati for Middletown. (McClelland)
- Fall 1827 Five groups approach New Jersey Legislature for charters: railroad between Camden and South Amboy, railroad from Bordentown to South Amboy, railroad from Trenton to New Brunswick, railroad from Elizabethtown

Point to Easton, and a canal between Trenton and New Brunswick.
(Thompson)

- Dec. 3, 1827 20th Congress convenes with power shifted from adherents of Adams Administration to those of Gen. Andrew Jackson. (EAH)
- Dec. 12, 1827 Charles T. Whippo reports on preliminary canal surveys between Pittsburgh and Erie; estimates cost at \$1.7 million. (CC)
- Dec. 15, 1827 Charles T. Whippo reports on his examination of Mitchell and Wilson's surveys between the West Branch and the Allegheny; finds insufficient water on Sandy Lick summit and feeder for Two Lick summit too expensive; estimates will require large reservoirs and feed pipes costing \$4 million. (CC)
- Dec. 1827 Treasury Dept. classifies punched railroad rails as manufactured iron subject to only a 25% ad valorem duty, instead of bar iron, taxed at \$30 per ton; done after lobbying by John Bolton, Pres. of Delaware & Hudson Canal. (Dilts)
- Dec. 19, 1827 South Carolina Canal & Railroad Company incorporated to build from Charleston to Augusta, Ga., on the Savannah River. (RRH)
- Dec. 20, 1827 John Randel, Jr., reports on surveys from Northumberland to New York state line; estimates \$2.2 million for east bank and \$1.9 million for west bank; Charles Ellet, Jr. (1810-1862), works on crew as first engineering job. (CC, Gray)
- Dec. 20, 1827 Planking of Union Canal summit level completed. (HazR)
- Dec. 24, 1827 Memorial of Harrisburg Convention on tariff presented to Congress; the South, which sells staples on the world market and imports its manufactured goods, opposes the tariff, compounding sectional tensions that already exist over the slavery issue. (EAH)
- Dec. 25, 1827 Report of Maj. John Wilson on surveys between Philadelphia and Susquehanna River; finds canal wholly impracticable and recommends construction of railroad. (canal rept date 12/14, RR 12/17)
- Dec. 25, 1827 Charles T. Whippo reports on survey of canal down east bank of Susquehanna from Chickies Creek to Maryland state line; estimates cost at \$1.05 million. (CC)
- Dec. 28, 1827 Union Canal opens between Reading and Middletown on Susquehanna River; built as a narrow canal limited to 25-ton boats; this and chronic problems of supplying water to the summit level near Lebanon render it

unsatisfactory as an outlet for the western trade of the state canals. (HazR has first complete transit 12/29 - check AR (12/28), Rdg paper)

- 1827 Steamboat *Swan* built at New York for Thomas Gibbons's Union Line run between New York and New Brunswick. (Stanton)
- 1827 Union Canal plagued by leaks in limestone area at summit; first steam pumping engine, built in Pittsburgh, breaks; builds two water wheels and a second steam engine. (AR)
- 1827 State of Maryland subscribes additional \$500,000 to C&O Canal. (- Sanderlin says sub to C&O contingent on \$1 million federal subscription? see act prob. spring 1828)
- 1827 Federal government grants 291,000 acres to Illinois to fund canal between Lake Michigan and Illinois River.
- 1827 National Road completed through Centreville and Wayne County, Ind.