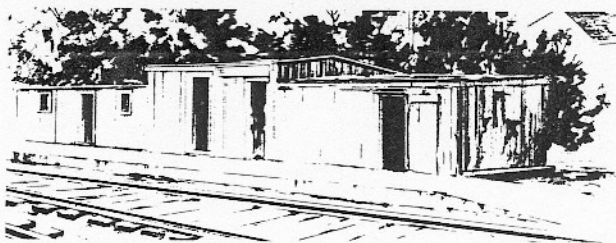


The Railroad

In 1850 the first track was laid and was opened for public use in the summer of 1853 (one source says June 3, another July 4) as far as Pleasant Valley (now Plain City). Fare for this trip was 28 cents. None of the conventional hallmarks of an authentic railroad opening was present -- no ribbon cutting -- no speeches or editorials. In March, 1859, the rest of the line was completed by an Indiana company. In 1856 the C. P. & I. went into receivership. In 1863 the company's entire stocks and debts (\$1,151,108) were wiped out and a new company, The Columbus & Indianapolis Railroad was organized. A series of mergers followed, each with a new name: 1864 -- Columbus-Indianapolis Central Railroad; 1867 -- Columbus Indiana Railway; 1869 -- the Panhandle Line leased it, making a higher bid over Jay Gould of the Erie Line. This was the Pittsburg, Cincinnati, Chicago and St. Louis Railroad. In 1921 the Panhandle Line leased itself to the Pennsylvania Railroad for 999 years. In 1968 it became the PennCentral and in 1976 ConRail.

When the tracks were first laid, the track gauge was four feet, ten inches, called the Ohio Gauge. This was changed in 1886 to the standard gauge -- four feet, eight and one-half inches. John R. Hilliard was the first track superintendent on a part time basis, but gave up the job in 1856 because of his other activities.

The first railroad station was three box cars put together to form a building, located on the north side of



the tracks, west of Main Street. It was also the Railway Express Company office. This structure was replaced sometime in the 1890's with a regular station structure which was used until 1962 when all services (passenger and freight) in or out of Hilliard ceased. Passenger service had been discontinued about 1944. Fare at this time to Columbus was 75 cents compared to the 10 cents it had been in 1853. This new structure was of the most common design for all small towns, a fair imitation of Elizabethan style half timbering. This was a combination depot, for here passengers, mail, express, baggage



and telegraph traffic were handled, meeting all the town's transportation and communication needs before the introduction of automobiles (about 1910) and telephone (about 1900). It was unusual in design in that it had three large sliding doors for the handling of various cargoes, but there was no door just for the people. The first agent, of record, was Orange Sells (later to become Mayor). The last full time agent was Paul VanCulin. In 1969 this station was released by the Pennsylvania Rail-



road to The Northwest Franklin County Historical Society and moved to Weaver Park, where it was renovated to become the first building in Northwest Village.