

CUMBERLAND VALLEY RAILROAD (CVRR)



History Highlights



April 10, 1835

Pennsylvania legislature creates a charter to build the CVRR.



August 12, 1837

First section of the railroad completed from Carlisle to Bridgeport on the Susquehanna River. Early engine "Pioneer" was a very early style of steam locomotive operated on the CVRR. It was designed to pull two light passenger cars and saw much diverse use during its time in service. The locomotive was severely damaged by fire during a Confederate raid on Chambersburg during the Civil War. Pioneer was rebuilt and was in use until the mid-1880s.

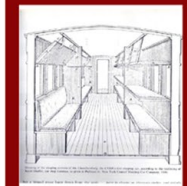
Cumberland Valley Railroad "The Pioneer", engine #13, near Carlisle. Photo by George M. Primrose, 1880s

November 10, 1837

First CVRR train travels from Harrisburg to Newville.

November 16, 1837

Railroad connection was completed to Chambersburg.



1838 First sleeper rail cars in the United States were used on the CVRR. Sleeper cars enabled enhanced continuous travel from Harrisburg to Pittsburgh when the rail portion of the trip occurred during darkness. However, passengers had to switch to stagecoach in Chambersburg for travel on to Pittsburgh.

Drawing from History of the Cumberland Valley Railroad, by Paul J. Westhaeffer

January 16, 1839

First train crosses the CVRR bridge over the Susquehanna River connecting Harrisburg and Bridgeport on the river's west bank.



A train crosses the Susquehanna River on the Cumberland Valley Bridge, c. 1907. Copy of a postcard.

December 4, 1844

CVRR bridge over the Susquehanna burns. A new bridge is completed in 1846. Due to fires and severe weather/river events there were five CVRR bridges built over the Susquehanna between 1839 and 1916.



South Mountain R.R. Engine #1, "South Mountain", with tender and box car. Engine house is in the background. Photo taken at Pine Grove, c. 1875.

Civil War, 1861-1865

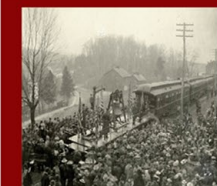
CVRR was heavily used throughout the war supporting the Northern efforts, especially troop and supply movements in response to the battles of Antietam and Gettysburg. Numerous Confederate raids were made on the railroad to interrupt supplies and troop movements. South Mountain Railroad engine (pictured) exemplifies engines of the Civil War era.



CVRR Dillsburg Line Engine # 30 at Williams Grove Park in Monroe Township, c. 1930.

1870-1875

Rail "Recreation Excursions" on the CVRR become very popular. Destination parks were built at Pine Grove, Mt. Alto and Williams Grove. Recreation excursions were introduced by railroad companies to increase rail travel.



The Liberty Bell on its way to the Exposition in Charleston, South Carolina. The photo was taken by Deemer Eckels as the train stopped in Newville, Pa. on January 6, 1902.

January 6, 1902

The Liberty Bell Special train passed through the Cumberland Valley on the CVRR traveling to Charleston, SC for the South Carolina Interstate and West Indian Exposition. The bell had been requested from Philadelphia as a loan to enhance the Exposition. The bell was exhibited in Charleston for five months.

1906 Due to a national economic boom, traffic on the CVRR was heavy, with trains passing down the main streets of Carlisle, Shippensburg and Chambersburg approximately every 20 minutes. This traffic was very disruptive for the communities and helped influence a major rebuilding/enhancement of the railroad.

1916 New demands for more powerful locomotives transporting coal drove enhancements in rolling stock, rail facilities and engines. These new engines were far heavier and more powerful than preceding locomotives.

June 2, 1919 The Cumberland Valley Railroad becomes part of the larger Pennsylvania Railroad (PRR). New competing transportation challenges in the 20th Century such as Trolleys, automobiles and truck transport signaled the railroad's slow demise.



Photo by Guth Studio, Carlisle.

October 16, 1936

On this special day two very different trains are in Carlisle. P.R.R. Engine 5011, the last scheduled train to run on High Street, traveling east in the first two blocks of West High Street.



PRR. Streamliner Engine 3768, the ceremonial last train to run on High Street, sitting on East High Street, October 16, 1936. The train took passengers at 10 cents each to the first switch east end of Carlisle and then backed up to the new station on Penn Street.

1952 Regular passenger/commuter train service on the CVRR ends.



Horses, wagons, carts and people outside of the Cumberland Valley Railroad Station in Newville, Pennsylvania, c. 1912. Photo by Maynard Hoover.

1958 Newville Railroad station closed after 121 years of continuous service.

1961 The PRR ran the last passenger train on the CVRR line.

1974 The Regional Rail Reorganization Act is signed by President Nixon, creating Conrail as a government funded private company. Conrail was developed to deal with the collapse of freight and passenger railroad services in the eastern United States.

1979-1980 Conrail abandoned the southern half of the Shippensburg Secondary (from the west side of Carlisle to Shippensburg).



A train passes Shippensburg State College in the early 1960s. Photo by Jim Bradley.

This photograph, taken in front of the Shippensburg State College (now Shippensburg University of Pennsylvania), represents the important history of railroading in the Cumberland Valley. That history is now honored by the CUMBERLAND VALLEY RAIL TRAIL.



Sign funded by a grant from Harrisburg Bicycle Club

