

Findlay, Fort Wayne & Western Railroad and Rt. 224

Trains have not traversed the abandoned Findlay, Fort Wayne & Western Railroad for over 100 years, but the roadbed is used today.

Preparations for the construction of the railroad started in 1887. Once completed, the railroad spanned nearly 80 miles, beginning in Findlay, and ending in Fort Wayne, Ind., according to information published in the 1895 Ohio Railway Report.

That "promise of future prosperity" may not have envisioned the effect that World War I would have on small railroads, including the Findlay, Fort Wayne & Western. Several months before the war ended in 1918, John Carrothers, receiver for the railroad, filed abandonment proceedings in United States Court at Cincinnati. "The report of the Receiver on the financial condition of the road showed that the company expended, for operating expenses, about \$45,000 more than the earnings of the road and that the bondholders had refused to further finance the road," March 1, 1918. This would also prove to be the last year of operation for the Findlay, Fort Wayne & Western Railroad. "The work of junking the rail line between Findlay and Ft. Wayne will begin the latter part of the week," The Van Wert Daily Bulletin stated on December 24, 1918. "Two crews are now on hand, the work starting at the Ft. Wayne end first."

The story of the Findlay, Fort Wayne & Western right-of-way, however, does not end with the abandonment of the railroad. Nearly 20 years after the last train journeyed down the tracks, the possibility of turning a portion of the old right-of-way into a highway was being considered. "The federal and state engineers in their surveys have recommended that the highway [Route 224] be moved from its present location along the Blanchard River trail, to a roadbed further north which was formerly used by the Findlay-Fort Wayne and Western railroad," the Sentinel reported in its July 22, 1938, issue. "The reasons for the change...are the large number of curves on the present highway and the low places...which are frequently flooded following heavy rains." The relocation became a reality, and by mid-October 1939, the new highway had been constructed. Today, U.S. Route 224 continues to serve as a vital transportation route for the area communities, just as its predecessor - the Findlay, Fort Wayne & Western Railroad - once did.