

The Toledo & Indiana Railway Company was incorporated in 1901 to construct an electric interurban rail line westward from Toledo. The T. & I. was envisioned as part of an interurban network to connect Toledo, Indianapolis and Chicago.

The Toledo & Indiana Railway's interurban cars were similar to trolleys, with their electric motors powered through an arm or "kite" extending from the top of the car to an overhead power line.

The Toledo & Indiana's route paralleled today's Norfolk Southern line between Toledo and Bryan, but the interurban cars provided more convenient schedules, more passenger stops, and were less expensive than passenger service on the "steam" railroad. These advantages, coupled with the fact that automobiles were still uncommon and roads unimproved, made the T. & I. an attractive option for travelers.

In the spring of 1905, the Toledo & Indiana constructed a generating station near the Tiffin River west of Stryker to power its interurban cars and extended its rails to Bryan.



A T. & I. electric interurban car pauses at the railway's depot on East Lynn Street in Stryker



A steam locomotive scoops up water "on the fly" at the Tiffin River track pans in Stryker

Later that year, the T. & I. completed a car maintenance and storage facility east of its generating station and erected a combination passenger/freight depot on East Lynn Street in Stryker.

In addition to supplying power for its interurban cars, the Stryker T. & I. generating station provided electricity to many northwest Ohio communities, bringing much of the area into the "modern age."

As highways and secondary roads improved, and automobiles and trucks became more common, interurban railways struggled financially. On October 15, 1939, Toledo & Indiana Railway Car 115 made the last trip over the rail line piloted by Lendall W. Vernier of Stryker, the company's most senior motorman.

On September 23, 2006, an Ohio Historical Marker recognizing Stryker's rich railroad heritage was dedicated at the Stryker depot.

*Brochure by Kevin M. Maynard*

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## Stryker's Railroad Heritage



Stryker's former Lake Shore & Michigan Southern/New York Central Railroad passenger station, listed on the National Register of Historic Places, symbolizes the community's rich railroad heritage

### *The Stryker Depot*



Stryker's Lake Shore & Michigan Southern Railroad passenger depot, circa 1907

**S**tryker's historic depot symbolizes the community's origin and rich railroad heritage. Named for Rome, N. Y., attorney and railroad executive John Stryker, the village was surveyed September 19, 1853, beside the proposed Northern Indiana Railroad. Without the railroad, the site of Stryker would likely be farmland or forest today.

The Michigan Southern & Northern Indiana Railroad reached Stryker in 1854, making it the first Williams County community with rail facilities and spurring the town's early growth.

The depot was the focal point of activity in a railroad town. At the depot travelers and salespeople arrived and departed; freight, express packages and mail were shipped and received; raw materials, manufactured goods, livestock and other agricultural products loaded and unloaded; etc. The depot was the literal heart of a railroad town.

Stryker's first railroad station appears to have been a small combination passenger/freight station on the south side of the tracks.

In 1876, the Lake Shore & Michigan Southern Railroad constructed a fine wooden depot on the north side of the tracks. This depot burned down on March 22, 1900.

Stryker's existing passenger depot was completed about July 9, 1900, on or near the site of the old station. Passenger service from the Stryker station ceased around 1956.

In 1985, late area industrialist and philanthropist Erie Sauder purchased and donated the historic railroad depot to the Village of Stryker. On August 7, 1989, the structure was placed on the National Register of Historic Places. The Village continues to maintain the building for community use and benefit.

For about 60 years, during the heyday of steam locomotives, Stryker was the site of the Lake Shore & Michigan Southern/New York Central railroads' "track pans" that allowed steam locomotives to scoop up needed water without stopping, shaving valuable time from railroad timetables.

The Stryker track pans were installed as early as 1890 at the Tiffin River west of town. In 1910, the track pans were moved about a mile east of Stryker, where a new pumping and heating plant was constructed.

As the New York Central switched from steam to diesel locomotives, track pans became obsolete. The Stryker track pans operated for the last time on or about March 1, 1954.

In 1966, the New York Central Railroad proposed abandoning its traditional long-haul rail passenger service and replacing it with high-speed shuttle service between major metropolitan hubs 200 miles or less apart. As part of its investigation, the New York Central conducted tests from Butler, Ind., through Stryker, due the long stretch of level, straight track.



In 1966, this jet-powered railcar set the North American rail speed record through Stryker

The tests were conducted using the M-497 passenger railcar equipped with an aerodynamic front to reduce wind resistance and two turbojet engines to propel the car.

During the M-497's second run on July 23, 1966, the North American rail speed record of 183.85 miles per hour was established.

Engineer Donald Wetzel recalled that the railcar reached 197 miles per hour during the second run, but he was instructed to slow down by New York Central president Alfred Perlman, who sat in the fireman's seat next to him. The M-497 fell just short of the world's rail speed record at that time of 205.6 miles per hour.

The New York Central's high-speed shuttle plans were scrapped following its 1968 merger with the Pennsylvania Railroad, despite the successful 1966 demonstration through Stryker.

From 1905 to 1939, Stryker was the hub of the Toledo & Indiana Railway, a combined interurban rail line and electric company.