



## **AN INTRODUCTION TO THE HISTORY OF THE RAILWAY**

From 1832 to 1972, the Northern Central Railway (NCR) provided a vital link between Baltimore, Maryland and York, Pennsylvania. The railroad carried passengers and freight between the two cities, and was the focus of many small communities in between.

The railroad's rich and colorful history began on March 13, 1828, when the Maryland State Legislature issued a charter which allowed the Baltimore and Susquehanna Railroad (B&SRR) to begin building in Maryland. Construction began quickly just south of North Avenue, Baltimore City's northern boundary. By the summer of 1831, horse drawn railroad carriages were operating as far as Lake Roland.

Because Pennsylvania would not allow the railroad company to build in Pennsylvania, the B&SRR began building a branch line toward Westminster. This line was called the Greenspring Branch and, by the summer of 1832, it was open to Owings Mills.

The first steam locomotive, called "The Herald," made its first run on August 7, 1832 to Timonium, 12 miles north of Baltimore City.

In 1834 the Pennsylvania Legislature chartered the York and Maryland Line Railroad to construct a railroad line from York, Pennsylvania to the Maryland Line. This new railroad joined the Baltimore and Susquehanna Railroad to create a route from Baltimore to York.

As the railroad grew, so did the little towns and communities that bordered the railroad. By 1838, Monkton had become an important stop on the railroad. Local towns used the railroad to ship fertilizer, agricultural equipment, raw materials, farm produce and even U.S. mail.

In May 1854, after 26 years of building, the B&SRR and the York and Maryland Line consolidated with two other regional railroads to create the Northern Central Railway Company.

The Civil War had a great impact on the NCR. President Lincoln travelled the NCR line to give his Gettysburg Address. Federal troops rode the Northern Central from Pennsylvania to Washington, D.C. and garrisoned the local railroad bridges over the Gunpowder. In 1865, Abraham Lincoln's black-draped funeral train carried the assassinated president north through Baltimore to Pennsylvania via the NCR line.

After the Civil War ended, the towns along the railroad boomed. By 1880 the NCR was hauling over one and a half million tons of freight annually, including lumber, grain, agricultural products, iron ore from Ashland Mills, cotton products from the Phoenix Mill, and passengers who travelled regularly throughout the Gunpowder Valley.

By 1914, the giant Pennsylvania Railroad Company purchased a controlling share of NCR stock, and leased the Northern Central Railroad line.

Even as this purchase was made, the era of the railroad was drawing to a close. The automobile was making its debut, and would soon surpass the railroad in convenience for local travelers. On June 27, 1959 the "Parkton Local," the NCR's local commuter run, made its last trip. Freight service continued until June 22, 1972, when Hurricane Agnes devastated the railroad line, destroying many bridges and tearing up tracks.

The NCR line sat abandoned until October 1980, when Maryland's Department of Natural Resources acquired the right-of-way from Ashland to the Mason-Dixon Line. The property was to be developed as a part of Gunpowder Falls State Park, for use as a hike and bike trail.

The first 7.2 miles of the NCR trail was opened to hikers and bikers on December 8, 1984. Work began to restore the Monkton Train Station for use as a visitor center on the trail, and the remaining 12.5 miles of trail were developed for use. The dedication of the Monkton Station and the trail took place on November 11, 1989. In honor of former Department of Natural Resources Secretary Dr. Torrey C. Brown and his overwhelming support and advocacy for the trail, the NCR trail was renamed the Torrey C. Brown Rail Trail (TCB) in 2007. As one of the oldest and most popular rail trails in the United States, the TCB was inducted into the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy Rail-Trail Hall of Fame in 2015.