



STANDING TALL IN TOLEDO

Ann Arbor Today

BY MICHAEL HARDING/PHOTOS BY THE AUTHOR

HALLETT TOWER STANDS TODAY as the last manned tower in the Toledo area, a holdback to another era but still operated by the Ann Arbor Railroad. That prior era of the Ann Arbor harkens back to a line stretching across lower Michigan from Toledo, Ohio, up to Frankfort, Mich., with car ferries connecting to Wisconsin and upper Michigan. Those days are gone, but it's been an interesting journey to get to today's vibrant short line.

Early in its existence the Ann Arbor was acquired by the DT&I but then shortly sold off to the Wabash. After a long period of Wabash control, the DT&I again acquired control when the Wabash was absorbed into the Norfolk & Western. The 1970 Penn Central bankruptcy forced yet another ownership change followed by Ann Arbor's

own bankruptcy and a temporary take over by Conrail in 1976.

The state of Michigan stepped in to acquire the entire line, since Conrail was only interested in operating the southern portion of the former Ann Arbor. In October 1977 the Michigan Interstate Railway was formed as a unit of the Michigan Department of Transportation to operate the trackage. The state of Michigan later privatized that entity, selling it off to the new Ann Arbor Railroad (AA) and what ultimately became the Great Lakes Central Railroad (GLC). The new "Annie" was formed on October 7, 1988, to operate the trackage from Toledo up to Osmer just north of Ann Arbor where the line interchanges with the GLC.

Since that time, the Ann Arbor has been a successful short line railroad al-

though heavily dependent on automotive traffic. Ottawa Yard is its primary yard and home to their small fleet of Geeps, located right next to Chrysler's Toledo North Assembly Plant, the birthplace of the modern Jeep. Aside from directly serving the assembly plant they also serve a number of other customers in town including trackage rights on the Norfolk Southern Olive Industrial down to the Maumee waterfront and on the backside of the Toledo Terminal over to Temperance Yard on CSX. Foundry and "frack" sand from GLC for interchange to NS, unit grain trains interchanged with GLC and auto part plants in Saline and Dundee comprise much of the remaining core business.

Motive power for today's Ann Arbor is comprised of three EMD GP38s of

OPPOSITE: The Ann Arbor Railroad road train out of Toledo is making good time heading north towards Ann Arbor with a solid consist of covered hoppers as they split the signals south of Todd Road near Ida Center, Michigan, on July 11, 2011. **ABOVE:** Ann Arbor 7791 is drilling auto-tracks along the west side of Ottawa Yard next to the Chrysler plant in Toledo, on October 1, 2011. This assembly plant is one of the railroad's most important customers.

Conrail heritage (AA 7771, 7791 and 7802), two EMD GP39-2s of Union Pacific heritage (AA 2368 and 2373) and two recent deliveries comprised of a former UP GP40 (AA 1337) and another ex-UP GP39-2 (AA 2370). The '38s wear an increasingly tattered looking Ann Arbor orange paint scheme while the first two GP39-2s sport yellow and grey with a newer Ann Arbor logo on the cab sides. The new 1337 was completely repainted by LTEX into the same yellow and grey with AA logos while the 2370 still sports its UP yellow and gray with no logos on the unit at all. Assignments over the last couple years typically have the two yellow units (sometimes with an orange one sandwiched in the middle) operating the one road train while the orange units typically are used individually to

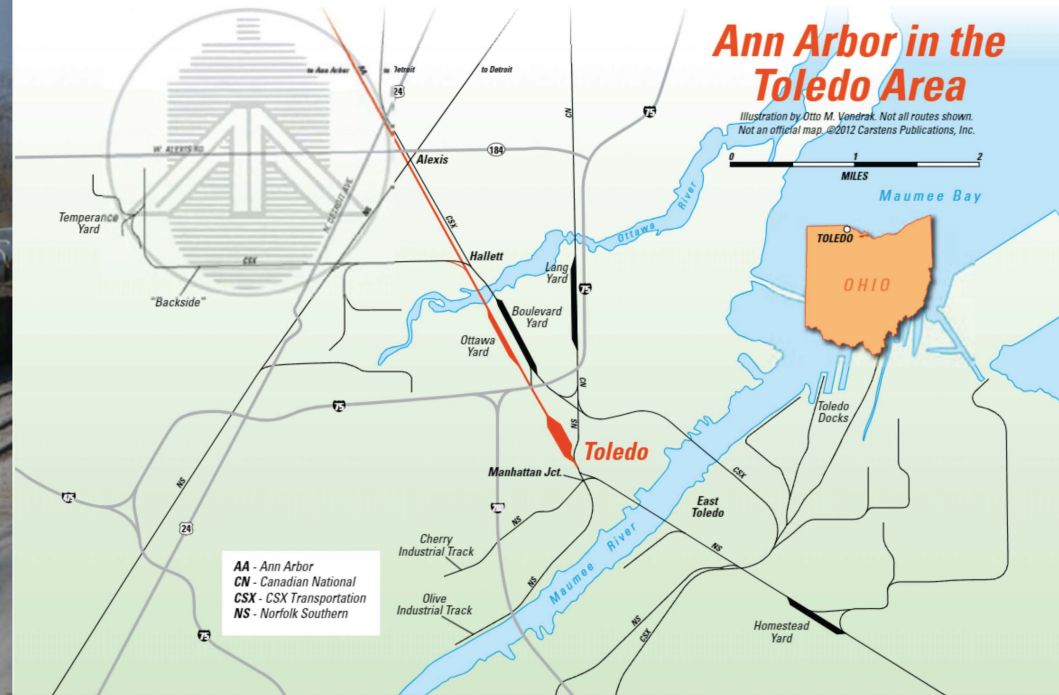
RIGHT: The 7791 has just picked up interchange on the south side of GTW Crossing (south of CN's Lang Yard) and is heading back to Ottawa Yard. This view is from the dead end of Troy Street next to Manhattan Junction where the Olive Industrial and Cherry Industrial cross. **BELOW:** This November 2009 view from I-75 shows Ottawa Yard's south end ladder tracks and the engine facility. The entire roster before the delivery of the two new yellow units was on hand in this weekend.

ANN ARBOR RAILROAD LOCOMOTIVE ROSTER

Road No.	Model	Built	Acquired	Heritage
AA 7771	EMD GP38-2	10/69	1985	PC 7771, ex-CR 7771
AA 7791	EMD GP38-2	10/69	1985	PC 7791, ex-CR 7791
AA 7802	EMD GP38-2	10/69	1985	PC 7802, ex-CR 7802
AA 2368	EMD GP39-2	10/84	2003	MKT 369, ex-UP 2368, ex-WP 2368,
AA 2373	EMD GP39-2	10/84	2003	MKT 374, ex-UP 2373, ex-WP 2373
AA 1337	EMD GP40	8/68	2011	PC 3111, ex-CR 3111, ex-MKT 3111/237, ex-UP 672/9955/1337, ex-LTEX 1337
AA 2370	EMD GP39-2	4/84	2012	MKT 371, ex-UP 2370, ex-WP 2370, ex-NEGS 2370



Only July 6, 2009, the 7791 is leaving Ottawa Yard with cars to take over to CSX Temperance Yard, approaching Hallett Tower just short of Matzinger Road in North Toledo.





switch the yard and assembly plant, and run around doing local switching. The new yellow units have been spotted added to the road power set which will likely leave the orange units staying close to home. Ottawa yard itself is readily visible from the southbound lanes of I-75 or Chrysler Drive and a quick count of the power sitting in the yard can tell you whether anything's out running or not.

The Ann Arbor road train typically originates in Ottawa Yard in Toledo in the early evening, heads north up to Ann Arbor and returns back to Ottawa Yard generally before morning. That makes it a challenge to photograph in daylight. The best odds are in the middle of the summer when the days are longest. During the winter, the crew generally isn't even on duty in daylight. The road train usually does any work along the line and if they switch the GEMA Auto engine plant in Dundee they'll often run out of daylight there. One of the scenic highlights of the line is the bridge over Huron River on the north side of Ann Arbor, though it's challenging to get a train on it in daylight. Sometimes the Ann Arbor road train can also be caught heading south in morning daylight.

The Ann Arbor rails north of Toledo aren't entirely quiet during the day, though. Canadian National exercises trackage rights from Dianne Junction south of Dundee down to Alexis and Hallett in Toledo. CN trains 384/385 run daily from CN Flat Rock Yard to and from Toledo via the NS Detroit Line connection at Alexis. From Toledo they go to Bellevue on NS as 184 and return as NS 353. CN trains 246/247



TOP: The original two Ann Arbor GP39-2s have their train well in hand on July 25, 2011, as they roll through the Michigan countryside near Ida. The head auto parts cars are destined for the plant in Dundee, not much farther up the line. **ABOVE:** 7791 is returning to the yard after working a customer off the Ann Arbor main just north of Hallett Tower on December 30, 2006.

are less frequent, largely automotive traffic and come off the Ann Arbor at Hallett to continue down to CSX Walbridge yard as Z241 and return. Hallett tower also sees a number of "foreign" moves on the Ann Arbor in the form of NS and CSX yard jobs bringing interchange traffic. NS can access the Ann Arbor directly at Alexis or via the backside of the Toledo Terminal from the Detroit line to Hallett. The CSX interchange is all done via the backside at Hallett. Quite a bit of radio conversa-

tion tends to take place for some of these moves with the CSX "RL" dispatcher giving permission to open the "pickle patch" switch that connects the Terminal to the Ann Arbor.

Ann Arbor also exercises rights on the backside of the Toledo Terminal to access Temperance Yard which is largely hidden between West Laskey Road and West Alexis Road. The yard supports several local industries. The largest one Ann Arbor switches is the Industrial Waste Group which handles



loads of Automotive Shredder Residue (ASR or "fluff"). They also run down the NS Olive Industrial out the south end of Ottawa Yard to switch Ohio Blenders along the Maumee River. Industries are switched as needed although at least one orange Geep is often active during most days with the weekends being a bit more quiet. Ann Arbor jobs are usually referred to over the radio by engine number. Operations on the Ann Arbor are dispatched by the Hallett Tower operator.

Over the years since the new Ann Arbor's creation the railroad has not changed dramatically but continues to operate with a fairly stable base of traffic and good connections. They've faced challenges such as the 45 yard long washout of the main line in May 2011 in Ann Arbor; they met that challenge with a quick response that had the washout filled and repaired within a week. Though the line may lack matched pretty power or easy to chase daylight road trains it's an interesting and successful operation that adds a dash of color to the railroad scene in the area. The Ann Arbor, like Hallett Tower itself, continues to stand tall and witness the passing of Toledo railroad history. ■

TOP: Late on a August evening in 2008 the Ann Arbor road train is working the NS interchange at Milan, Mich., with the NS (former Wabash) diamonds in the foreground. By time they finished their work the sun would set on them as they rolled out of town. **LEFT:** The 7802 is preparing to pick up loads of Jeeps out of the Chrysler facility next to Ottawa Yard. **BELOW:** The original pair of GP39-2s are getting their train together and ready to depart Ottawa Yard to head north on the evening of July 25, 2011.

