Since November 2, 1854, when the first train steamed through Ada, the railroad has played an important part in the community’s economic and social life. It hauled out lumber from the area’s extensive forests early in the village’s history, and later did the same for crops and livestock. It also brought in goods necessary for a flourishing community and students to the local university.
Predecessor of Pennsylvania RR, 1850’s
• Yelvertown
• Silver Spings
• New Stark
• Huntersville
• Grant
• Patterson
• North Washington (Dola)
The original depot, which handled both passengers and freight, was constructed roughly one block east of the current structure. The site was on the east side of S. Johnson St. next to the railroad tracks.
Original location ca. 1 block East of present
Map from 1910

Original depot
When the new depot opened in December 1887, the old building was converted to freight purposes only.

In 1941, it was sold to John Atha, a local lumber dealer. He demolished the depot in October 1941.
Circa 1939

E. Highland Street
It appears that, by the 1880’s, both freight and traffic passenger traffic had increased significantly. Between 1860 and 1890, the population served by the depot had increased from roughly 500 to 3503.

By the mid-1880’s it was decided to erect a new depot just for passengers in the then-popular “stick-style” of architecture.

The following two pictures date from ca. 1903.
Of course, the depot was for many students, their first contact with Ada. New students faced strong recruiting competition from Northern’s three literary societies each of which gathered at the depot to sign up incoming students before the others.
The area next to the depot was made into a park. On May 30, 1903, a siege gun, originally from Ft. Mifflin, was dedicated as a memorial to Ada’s soldiers, living and dead.

This was actually the third such monument, the first being made of wood and coated to resemble stone and the second consisting of a brick core coated with cement. Neither survived the elements long.

The local GAR post raised the $50 cost of the weapon and $575 for the granite base.
As vital as the railroad’s contribution was, however, it also posed a significant safety hazard since Ada was bisected by the tracks. Indeed, pedestrians and vehicles on all three of the major north-south Streets, Main, Johnson and Gilbert, faced this peril. The danger increased in 1900 when a second set of tracks was added to accommodate the increased rail traffic.
Finally, following a train wreck in 1903, steps were taken to regulate the flow of traffic across the railroad tracks.
In January 1905, a control tower was erected just west of the Ada Depot from which crossing gates on Johnson and Main street could be operated.
Looking North on Main St.
Tower to Right
In addition to lowering the crossing gates, the operator warned pedestrians by a large bell on the tower’s side,
Demolition of Tower
February 1960
Although the new depot could have met the same fate as the freight facility and the control tower, wiser heads prevailed. In 1998, the structure was added to the National Register of historic places and has been maintained by the community over the years.
Passenger platform looking east
ADA PASSENGER DEPOT. 1887
Pennsylvania Railroad, Southwest Division

Ada grew alongside the tracks of the Ohio & Indiana Railroad, completed in 1854 between Crestline, Crawford County, and Fort Wayne, Indiana. This line became part of the Southwest Division of the Pennsylvania Railroad in 1869. Ada’s rapid growth as a college town in the 1880s prompted the railroad to build this distinctive and unique two-story Stick Style depot in 1887, departing from the railroad’s standard depot plans. Larger than most small-town stations, it features a second-story telegrapher’s office. For many years the station served as Ada’s gateway to the outside world. One of few surviving 19th century Pennsylvania passenger stations in Ohio, the Ada depot was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1998.

THE OHIO BICENTENNIAL COMMISSION, THE LONGABERGER COMPANY
VILLAGE OF ADA AND THE
ADA COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT CORPORATION
THE OHIO HISTORICAL SOCIETY
2001

16-33
What might have been
ADA, OHIO, - FEB. 6, 1901.

THE ELECTRIC LINES.

A Red Hot Meeting Friday Night.

Pursuant to a notice in last week's Record the council chamber was well filled Friday night.

W. F. Hufford was called to the chair and J. L. Sample was elected clerk.

Mayor Hickernell was called upon for remarks and said he thought an electric line through Ada would benefit the school; we should find out the route that we want—the one that would be the best for the town.

Prof. Willis was called out. He said he came to the meeting for information only, but thought the project the proper thing and incidentally remarked that a soldiers' monument of a more enduring type was sadly needed here.

Prof. Axline said: if we are to have three or four proposed lines the people should have some say on the selection; some roads would be a benefit and some would be