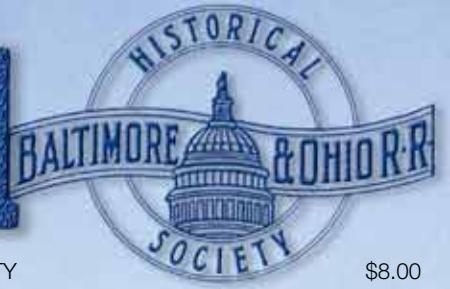


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# The Sentinel



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The B&O had a reputation for treating its passengers like royalty, and in at least one case the railroad was literally fit for a queen. When Elizabeth II and her consort, Prince Philip, visited the United States in 1957, the B&O took them overnight from Washington to New York (see *The Sentinel*, Volume 26, No. 4, fourth quarter 2006). **Office car 100**, which the B&O used frequently to convey presidents, was the car of choice. The royal couple posed on the observation platform at Union Station in Washington, and you can get a close look at such details as the floodlights mounted under the roof, venetian blinds at the windows and the B&O Special sign mounted on the railing. (*B&O Railroad Museum collection*)

## Where Are They Now? *Tracking the B&O's Office Cars*

By Frank H. Dewey

Photographs from the author's collection unless otherwise noted.

When the B&O's last *Form 6* was issued on January 1, 1954, it listed 13 office cars among the Miscellaneous Equipment (Service) on page 65. They were 97, 98, 100, 900, 901, 902, 903, 904, 905, 906, 907, 908, and 912. This was half of the business cars that were on the roster in January 1, 1934.

Part of that decline could be explained by the fact that only four of the 1934 fleet were cars of all-steel construction. But

that does not fully explain the decline in the fleet size since the 13 cars in 1954 still included five that were wooden with either a steel underframe or center sills.

Perhaps the white paper of January 11, 1967, written by then C&O/B&O Industrial Engineer and later Director of Passenger Services, William F. Howes, titled "Do We Really Need Office Cars" explains some of the decline in numbers. His analysis had found that in 1966 the

### The Cars Today

For photographs of all the cars as they look today, see pages 18 & 19.

average office car cost \$65,000 a year to maintain and operate.

He said that the historical use for office cars was to:

- Afford office space and lodging at remote field locations.



Bob Cohen walked 150 feet east on Number 1 track at Gaithersburg to get the picture that gives some idea of how little time engineer Robert G. Morgan had when he saw an automobile approaching Summit Avenue, the second crossing in this photograph (the nearer one is for commuters). Though much has changed between 1953 and February 2011—the parking garage in the left background occupies space where the B&O had a wye, and the auxiliary track is long gone from the front of the station—some things remain constant to work from, including the passenger station and, in the distance, the bridge carrying U.S. 240 across the tracks.

## Bad Night on the B&O

### *The Gaithersburg, Maryland, Wreck of February 11, 1953*

By Bruce Elliott

On the rainy evening of Tuesday, February 11, 1953, B&O train Number 23, the *West Virginian*, consisting of P-7e 5316 and eight cars, left Washington's Union Station headed to Parkersburg. Engineer Robert G. Morgan and fireman John E. Fraley, both Cumberland Division men, were in the cab.

The trip west on Number 1 track was uneventful for its first half-hour, until the train approached Gaithersburg, Maryland. Engineer Morgan was sounding the customary grade-crossing whistle of two longs, a short and a long, that would normally continue until the locomotive

was beyond the grade crossing at Summit Avenue, just beyond the passenger station. The locomotive bell was being rung, a requirement while approaching and passing public road crossings at grade. It was 10:50 p.m.

When the engine was about 150 feet east of the crossing the engineer saw an automobile approaching from the north. Morgan said he thought that the auto was going to stop as the train approached the crossing at a speed estimated at 67 mph, and was surprised when the car kept coming. The automobile was estimated to be traveling at about 10 mph.

The collision occurred 75 feet west of the station, and 20.81 miles west of Washington.

Maximum authorized speed for passenger trains in the vicinity of the accident was 75 mph.

The railroad and the ICC reported, dryly, that the main line in this vicinity is straight double track, with a 0.94 percent descending grade west. The highway crosses the track at an angle of 85 degrees, and is practically level north of the crossing.

West of the crossing, a trailing point crossover connected tracks 1 and 2. Part