

The Sentinel

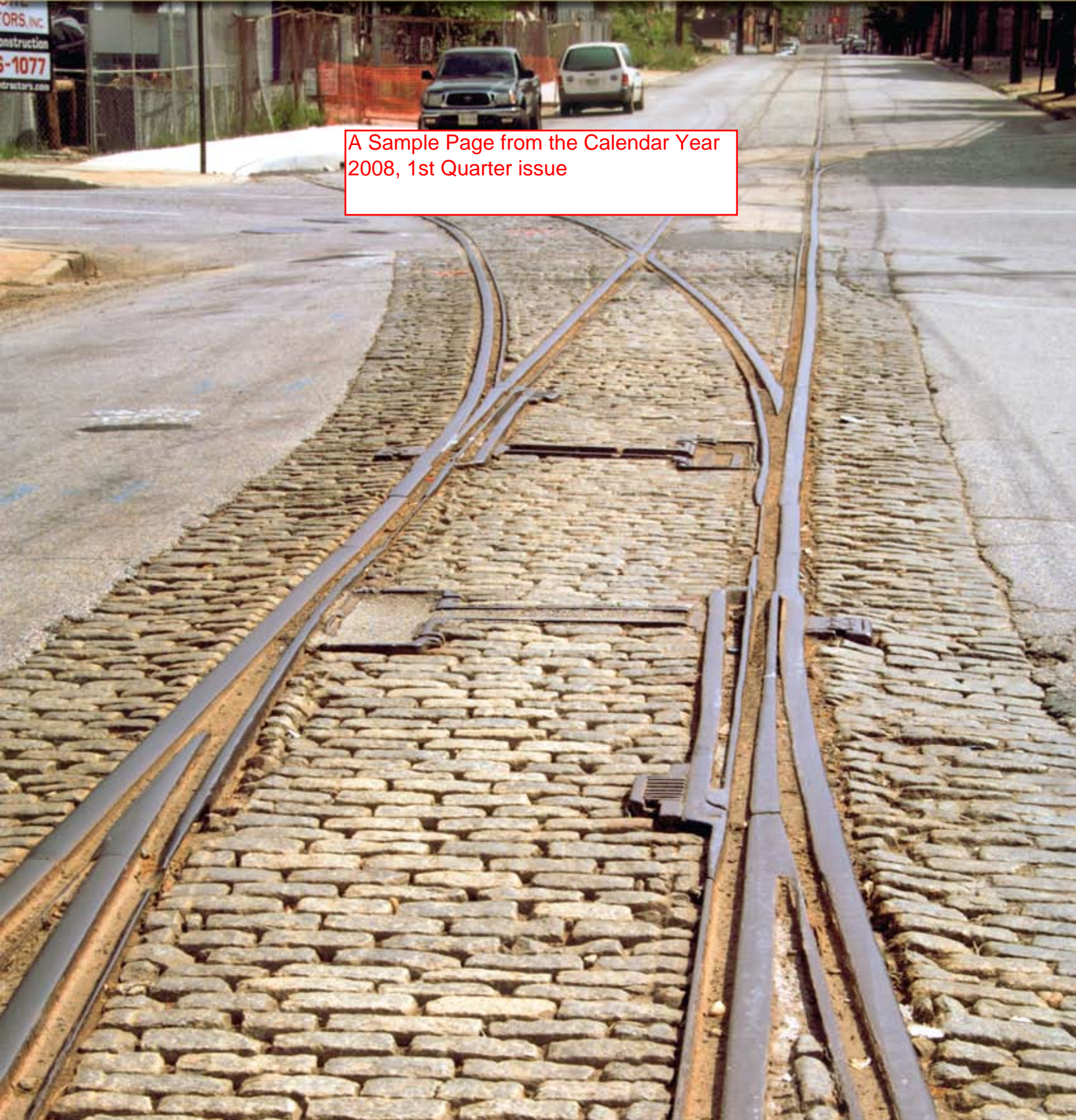


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A Sample Page from the Calendar Year
2008, 1st Quarter issue

Letter from the Editor

Remembering Brass

Once upon a time there was brass, those beautiful locos that came mostly from South Korea. They were expensive but totally—well, pretty accurate. There were only so many made. You could find used ones if you looked around and now, with eBay that task is easier.

Since the variety was far from you could get a good sense of though the lists herein do not

be all-inclusive. For example, in the 0-4-0 alignment there was the C-16 by Gem, Gem, Ken Kidder, International Models and M.B. Austin imported C-16as. In the 0-6-0 there was the D-30 by Akane or NorthWest Short Line. And as for the 0-8-0, there was the L-1 by Sunset and the L-2 by PFM. GHC brought in B-18 ten-wheelers.

Generally speaking, the PFMs and North-Wests were admired. The Akanes had poorer details than their competitors and some feel they are decidedly inferior. (They also, however, have their defenders who see them as sturdy, dependable runners that pull well.)

There were two problems, expense and poor running. Why was it that the makers of cheap plastic locomotives could produce ones that would run well and pull a lot of cars while the brass manufacturers whose price was, say, five times higher could not?

The brass models kept getting better; but they were getting steadily more expensive and production levels were falling. Wages in South Korea were rising, the same factor that had forced Japan out of the market earlier.

With the younger generation more interested in the kind of railroading they remember—that is, diesel—there were even people writing articles asking if this was going to be the end of steam. Yet, as so often happens, a problem provides its solution. Thus came the plastic revolution—affordable, highly detailed plastic locomotives so good that when I put one on my layout next to the equivalent brass ones you would be hard put to tell the difference.

Again, there is a problem: the mass production plastic versions are general prototypes. They are not specifically the B&O versions. You can certainly modify them, and many people have. But then that makes

them the basis for kitbashing rather than something completely satisfactory in their own right.

And brass certainly is done right, on the outside if not the inside. Take my three favorite locomotive types, the Consolidation,

A Sample Page from the Calendar Year 2008, 1st Quarter issue

the E-60 Sundancer/Pro Custom Hobbies (for a review see *Model Railroader*, February 1988, pp. 48-50; see also *The Sentinel*, Volume 24, Number 4, fourth quarter 2002).

Then there's the 2-8-2—the Q-1aa from Oriental and the Q-1c from PSC (the former has nicer detail; the latter runs better); the Q-3 from Westside (looks best), Overland (runs better) and Oriental (not very accurate). PSC did Q-4s, the Q-4b was done by Akane, PSC, Westside and Fuji; the Q-4d by Westside and the Q-7f by PSC. Now that's a fair amount of choice.

When it comes to the 4-6-2 you could have the P-1d by Oriental or Overland (that last one has a bad reputation); the P-5 from Oriental (problematic); the P-7 Akane (not so detailed); and the P-7c or -d from Key (the latter is a beauty, but we are talking well over four figures cost, a price tag that also applies to the P-7d Cincinnati by Key).

Once in South Korea on business, by the way, I toured the Samhonga plant. It is a modest building (from the street you would never guess what they made there). Inside, it was amazing. A huge collection of brass engines (there could easily have been 1,000), three layouts for testing, a superb research library, and the assembly line. The foreman was very gracious, albeit a bit suspicious (what they are planning was a well-kept secret lest rivals steal a march on them). Also you cannot buy anything since everything is committed to the mostly American importers.

As I was leaving he asked if he might ask me a question. And what he said went something like this: "I've been working here for 25 years. Can you please explain to me: Why do people buy these things?"

Don't worry. I told him.

—BARRY RUBIN

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On the Covers

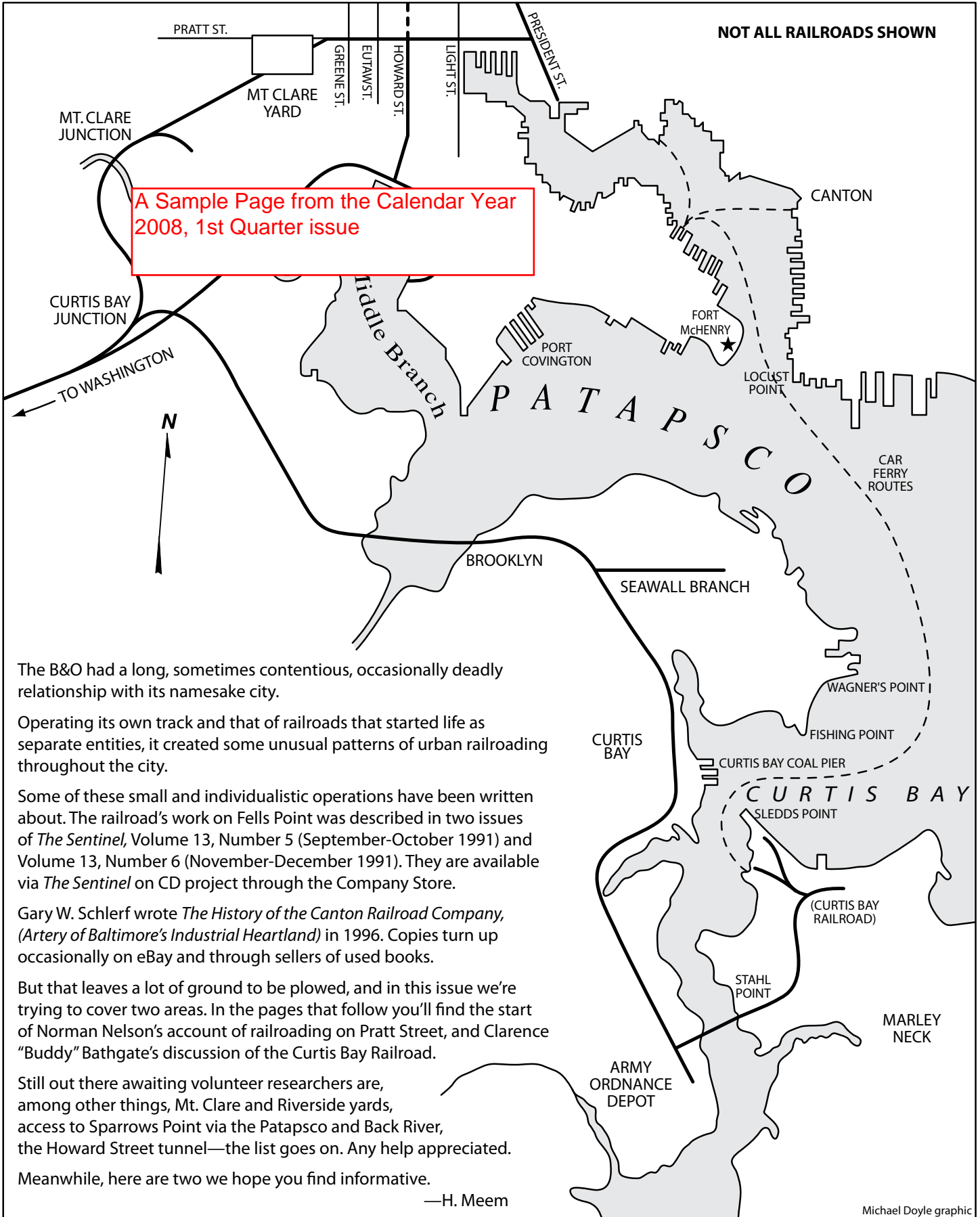
Front Cover: Single-point switches and rails surrounded by Belgian block remain at the intersection of Wicomico and Ostend streets in Baltimore. This was the sort of construction used on the Pratt Street line. (Barry Kenner photograph)

Back Cover: Responding to a note in *The Sentinel*, Jim Rogers sent along these pictures of street railroading in Baltimore. Track mobile DT-1, with cars for Arundel Corp., is on Thames Street in March 1983; Number 8408 pulls cars from B. Green Co., a wholesale grocer, on South Eutaw Street in January 1977.

In This Issue

THE B&O IN BALTIMORE, an overview	3
RAIL OPERATIONS ON BALTIMORE'S PRATT STREET, PART 1, BY R. N. NELSON	4
THE B&O ON MARLEY NECK, or, Running the Curtis Bay Railroad, BY CLARENCE "BUDDY" BATHGATE	13
A WEEKEND IN MARTINSBURG, BY JOHN TEICHMOELLER	26
RUNNING LIGHT, News, notes, a correction or two	31
B&O REVIEWS, Two books and one DVD	34

The B&O in Baltimore



The B&O had a long, sometimes contentious, occasionally deadly relationship with its namesake city.

Operating its own track and that of railroads that started life as separate entities, it created some unusual patterns of urban railroading throughout the city.

Some of these small and individualistic operations have been written about. The railroad's work on Fells Point was described in two issues of *The Sentinel*, Volume 13, Number 5 (September-October 1991) and Volume 13, Number 6 (November-December 1991). They are available via *The Sentinel* on CD project through the Company Store.

Gary W. Schlerf wrote *The History of the Canton Railroad Company, (Artery of Baltimore's Industrial Heartland)* in 1996. Copies turn up occasionally on eBay and through sellers of used books.

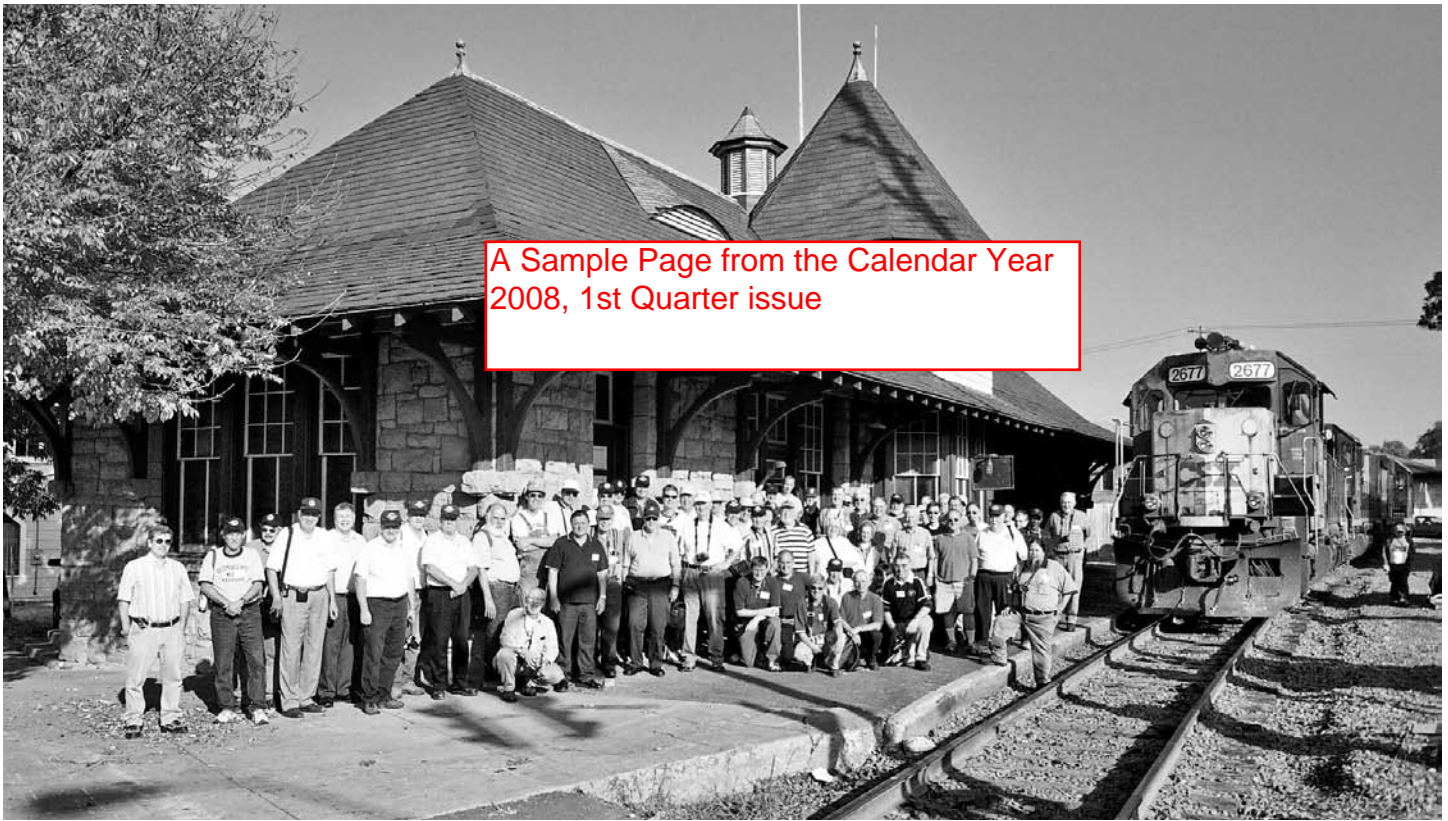
But that leaves a lot of ground to be plowed, and in this issue we're trying to cover two areas. In the pages that follow you'll find the start of Norman Nelson's account of railroading on Pratt Street, and Clarence "Buddy" Bathgate's discussion of the Curtis Bay Railroad.

Still out there awaiting volunteer researchers are, among other things, Mt. Clare and Riverside yards, access to Sparrows Point via the Patapsco and Back River, the Howard Street tunnel—the list goes on. Any help appreciated.

Meanwhile, here are two we hope you find informative.

—H. Meem

Michael Doyle graphic



Here, for the first time in years (a little drum roll, please), the annual convention “team photo” with a TRAIN in it! The group photo was taken on the Saturday of the convention in front of the E. Francis Baldwin-designed B&O station in Winchester, Virginia. (ay)

A Weekend in Martinsburg

By John Teichmoeller

Photographs by John Teichmoeller (jt) or Allen Young (ay) as indicated

The Society’s 2007 convention based in Martinsburg, West Virginia, covered the section of the railroad south of Harpers Ferry into the Shenandoah Valley and west of Harpers Ferry to Hancock. Attendance was typical—approximately 90 members.

Many of us, including myself, have visited Martinsburg before. However, I had only a book acquaintance with the railroad in the area. Accordingly, this meeting filled in the knowledge and coverage gaps from earlier meetings held to the south (Staunton, 2005), west (Cumberland and Grantsville, 1989 and 2000 respectively) and east (Frederick 1990).

In addition to being blessed with stunning weather, we saw plenty of trains. And this year’s handout book weighs about 2½ lbs. It contained not only the usual copies of employee timetables and track charts, but copies of historical articles and company publications

on industries. Moreover, inserted in the rear cover were a CD containing scans of various drawings (e.g. the Harpers Ferry station) and a DVD with three films—*Mail in Motion*, *Men & Mail* and *Delivering the Promise*. The Company Store has some copies for sale.

Thursday

Our meeting started with the customary evening presentations that summarized and clarified the territory we were to see the following day on bus trips.

An unofficial “textbook” and requisite reading for this convention could have been *East End* by Jeffrey Hollis and Charles Roberts. Thus it was fitting that Hollis, a Martinsburg resident, offered us the first program of the evening. His presentation was interesting and well-done, and even more commendable because he spoke to a slide program that had been assembled independently by Greg Smith

and that he had not previously seen.

Valley Railroad researcher Bob Cohen filled us in on the section of the road from Harpers Ferry to Strasburg Junction, Virginia.

The final program of the evening was by Greg Smith, who described his HO layout based on the East End of the Cumberland Division. The title and subject might have led non-modelers to skip this presentation. But in addition to showing photographs of his progress, Greg gave his rationale for basing a layout on this section of the railroad. His point was—as is evident by the subtitle of the Hollis book—the East End is “the neck of the bottle.”

Greg’s presentation impressed us with the diversity of motive power used on this section of the railroad as well as the respectable number of industries to provide switching opportunities. Greg explained the inevitable difficulty faced by

Sand Patch, Part Three – West Keystone, Connellsville to Pittsburgh, PA

DVD by Tom Rogers, Blue Ridge Productions, 2 hours, plus 11 minute bonus Company Store stock number 40034; \$30.00

Reviewed by Mike Cather

This newest title from Blue Ridge Productions demonstrates that Tom Rogers' already excellent work just keeps getting better. More pacing shots of trains in mountainous areas of western Pennsylvania, more razor-sharp lens work, and more acutely good sound capture make this DVD real fun. Tom has his DVD's produced by Sony and the professionalism shows throughout. There's no jerky camera work or blurred panning. Pacing shots are silken smooth. There's nothing amateur about these DVDs.

Sand Patch 3 continues Tom's journey along tight, mountainous rights of way as he follows the unspellable Youghiogheny River from Connellsville west to the Steel City. Along the way we see old towns like Dawson, where main line trains go of comfortable old homes. Made me think back east to one of the prettiest places I along the B&O, still postcard beautiful safely passed; I really didn't want to pack up and that stuff again.

Once we get past Coulter, Pennsylvania, we leave the leafy green river valley and enter the steelmaking region. At the McKeesport bridge, we see much action, including a pair of sparkling UP diesels pulling low-sulfur Colorado coal to Curtis Bay—imagine THAT happening in the old days!

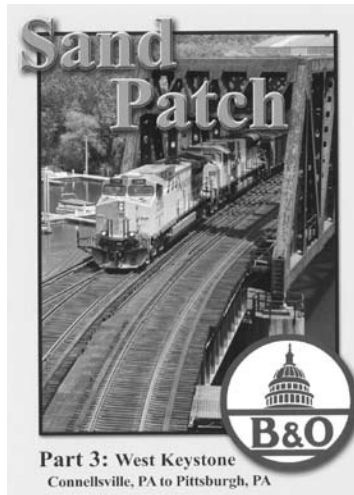
We see just about every paint scheme from major railroads and leasing companies in North America, brilliantly painted and old, weathered paint jobs too, shiny Amtrak consists, lots of mixed freight, single stacks, racks and coal moving in all directions.

Surprises include a W&LE train crossing the high trestle at

Banning; lots of CPLs; a string of nearly noiseless, brand shiny new coal gons going by at a whisper; a cloud of dust from a hopper car losing a grain load; the last two remaining P&LE signals; hot-metal bottle cars at the Edgar Thompson Steel Works—as seen from Kennywood amusement park across the river—and a hi-rail semi-tractor pulling two gons

Duquesne incline, still taking people up Mount Washington at a 30 percent grade. Tom gets into the operator's shack and gets us all the history and amazing facts of this industrial age relic that still performs flawlessly. True to his calling, Tom gets us footage of trains from the top of this quaint diversion.

With so many B&O places to visit, and so little time, I'm grateful that Tom lugs his gear into these areas to get these shots. At the end, Tom voices his willingness to extend his video series past Pittsburgh to whatever place we want, but asks to hear feedback. What do you want to see? Shall we send Tom out for yet another round of filming? I think he rather enjoys doing it.



A Sample Page from the Calendar Year 2008, 1st Quarter issue

Baltimore & Ohio's Capitol Limited and National Limited

By Joe Welsh, Voyageur Press, an imprint of Motorbooks International, 2007. 160 pages.

Illustrated with Index and Bibliography. \$36.95 from the Company Store (www.borhs.org/shopping/index.html)

Reviewed by Nick Fry

The B&O Railroad's passenger service was widely known among travelers as the best in the industry, particularly the flagships of the fleet, the Capitol Limited and National Limited.

The history of these trains has been given some treatment in previous works, but not to the depth that Joe Welsh provides in his new volume. Welsh zeroes in on these two trains and treats the reader to a tightly written narrative that informs and entertains.

Welsh whisks you onto the National Limited in 1960 with a detailed description of a trip from Mt. Royal Station in Baltimore to St. Louis, Missouri and then to Texas via the Missouri Pacific connection. Welsh introduces you to passenger agents, porters, chefs and your fellow passengers while describing accommodations and meals with such vivid detail you'd swear you'd made the trip yourself. (If you have, I envy you. Based on this chapter, my generation missed out on a neat trip.)

Welsh then dives into the historical details about these trains, their predecessors and the rise and eventual fall of the B&O's Limiteds and passenger service in general. He takes particular pains to explain the consist changes that took place throughout the years and also puts these trains in the broader context of passenger service trends and significant events in railroad history.

Welsh takes the time to provide information on the lesser trains that ran along with the Limiteds to St. Louis and Chicago and all points in between. While the detail isn't as impressive as what one reads about the flagship trains, the reader can see that there was a lot to B&O Railroad passenger service.

Of particular note, the Columbian, the Diplomat and the Ambassa-

dor get special mention in this book. Surprisingly the Cincinnati, one of the most visually stunning (but financially disappointing) steam trains that the B&O ran, gets much less space than a fan might expect. In this reader's case, it has caused a thoughtful re-evaluation of just how significant that train was to the greater scheme of B&O passenger service.

This book is blessed with many photos and images from the myriad of advertising that was created for these trains. Of particular note are the impressive color photos of the interiors of some of the lounge cars. These photos and some very interesting oral history come from Bill Howes, a passenger railroad executive with the B&O and Amtrak who had firsthand experience with the economics of these trains.

As a fan of railroad history and especially the B&O, I thoroughly enjoyed this work. There were no glaring inaccuracies that stood out to my eye (granted I am an archivist and a 19th Century U.S. historian not a passenger car or passenger train specialist). And blessing of blessings, this was a book with great pictures AND a bibliography! Readers can enjoy this book and use it to help with further historical research. This book deserves a place on any B&O lover's bookshelf.

GREAT PASSENGER TRAINS

BALTIMORE & OHIO'S
CAPITOL LIMITED AND NATIONAL LIMITED



A Sample Page from the Calendar Year 2008, 1st Quarter issue

