

ISSN 1053-4415

The Sentinel



A QUARTERLY MAGAZINE PUBLISHED BY THE BALTIMORE & OHIO RAILROAD HISTORICAL SOCIETY

\$8.00

VOLUME 46, NUMBER 3

THIRD QUARTER 2024



President's Report to Members

Greg Smith has asked the other members of the board and officers to take a turn writing the "President's Letter" in the *Sentinel* and it's my turn this issue.

I've been with the society for 20 years, as a member and as the archivist. The next five years may very well be the busiest and most memorable that I've experienced here as a member and volunteer with the B&ORRHS. The bicentennial of the B&O railroad and of railroading in North America in general is coming in 2027, with celebrations being planned to commemorate this event by multiple organizations.

For the B&O Railroad Historical Society, we've been looking at this event as an opportunity to help educate the public about our mission and make use of our collections and our organizations' group knowledge about the railroad. We have several parallel programs underway to do this. One is our publications program. Right now we have several books underway:

- A History of the St. Louis Division.
- A follow-up on the Baltimore book.
- A history of B&O china.
- Monographs on other railroad topics like freight and passenger car classes.
- A collaboration with the Railway & Locomotive Historical Society for a special issue on the B&O Railroad.

The society is also looking for additional topics related to the B&O that authors would like to see published.

A second program we are working on is a video presentation series. This is an outgrowth of the pandemic and the video presentations made in lieu of in-person mini-conventions. The society, and other railroad historical societies, have seen success in reaching new and broader audiences with video programs hosted on the internet.

We're interested in individuals who have short presentations, or concepts for presentations, that they want to develop that relate to the bicentennial of the B&O Railroad or to the B&O Railroad's history. We're also interested in individuals who can assist with recording and editing these presentations for the internet.

The society is also working on its annual meeting that will be in Baltimore during the anniversary year, and of course the B&O Railroad Museum has its major upgrade project underway to help prepare the site for the festivities, and set the museum facilities up for the future.

The great thing about our publication program and internet presentation project is that they can be done from anywhere. If you want to help with video production, have a book or monograph you want to write, or a presentation you'd like to tape, contact us at info@borhs.org or secretary@borhs.org.

Nick Fry
Archivist
Director at Large B&ORRHS

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The official publication of
**THE BALTIMORE AND OHIO
RAILROAD HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

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The Baltimore and Ohio Historical Society is a nonprofit corporation dedicated to preserving and disseminating historical information about The Baltimore and Ohio Railroad.

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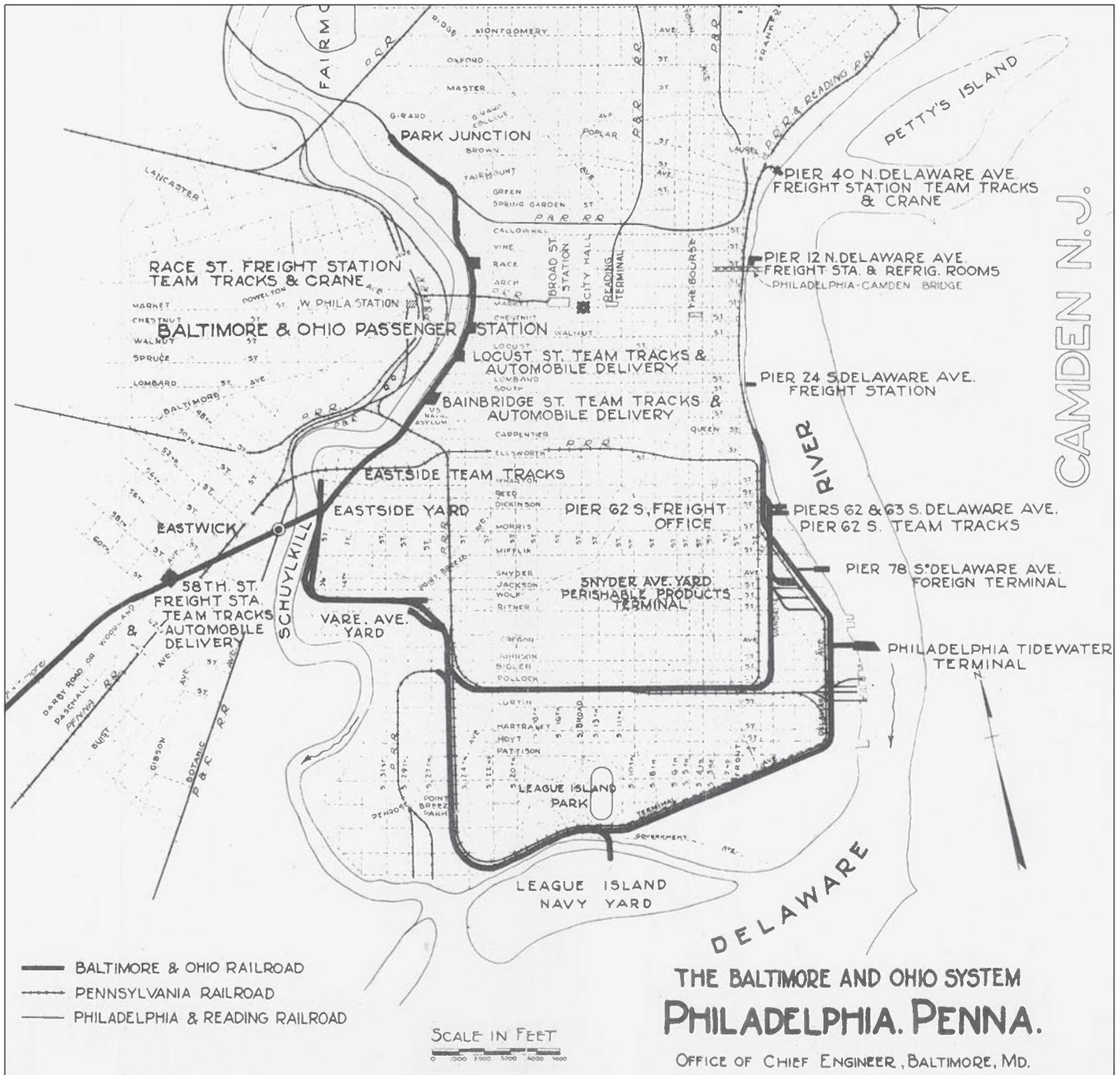
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FRONT COVER: B&O 3134, a class E-60 2-8-0 built by Alco for the Buffalo & Susquehanna in 1908, waits for the turnout to be aligned west of Addison, New York on the Buffalo Division, September 15, 1955, Richard Houser photo. (B&ORRHS Archives)

BACK COVER: In the summer of 1987 the green landscaping provided an attractive contrast to the red caboose. (Dwight Jones)



Undated map of the B&O facilities in Philadelphia, Office of Chief Engineer, Baltimore. The B&O had extensive freight facilities along the Delaware River including the Snyder Avenue Yard and the Perishable Products Terminal off Vandalia Street. (B&ORHS Archives)

The Philadelphia Perishable Products Terminal

By Brian Rochon

From 1890 until 1950, Philadelphia was the third most populous city in the US, after New York City and Chicago. With its large population and extensive port facilities, the city became an important market

for the B&O following completion of the Philadelphia Division in 1886.

In addition to various piers and yards, the B&O developed facilities to handle perishable food products in Philadelphia.

In the early years, fruit traffic was handled at Pier 12 North, on the Delaware River. The second floor of Pier 12 included an auction room, where fruit auctions were held, with seating for 200.



Construction of the Terminal, looking east toward the Delaware River, August 3, 1926. A Pere Marquette automobile and furniture car and a Lehigh Valley box car are on Delaware Avenue. The B&O foreign freight terminal at Pier 78 is in the background. (B&ORHS Archives)

B&O's Pier 11, located just to the south, handled merchandise traffic and fruit overflow from Pier 12; however, Pier 11 was condemned to make way for the new Delaware River Bridge (renamed Benjamin Franklin Bridge in 1955). When bridge construction began in 1922, the B&O remodeled Pier 22 South, its main freight station in Philadelphia, to handle the fruit business.

A platform was added that ran the length of the pier on both sides and extended the full width of the pier (200 feet) on the river end. Half the pier was enclosed, with heat provided in cold weather to prevent fruit from freezing. Two auction rooms were built on the second floor; one with seating for 196, and the other with seating for 96. The remodeled pier provided double the capacity of the old Pier 12 facility, and was in close proximity to the Dock Street Fruit and Produce Markets. It was officially opened for fruit handling on October 16, 1922.

In late 1925, the B&O and the Reading Company agreed to acquire land and construct a joint fruit and produce terminal in South Philadelphia. Each railroad contributed 50% of the cost. A new company, the Philadelphia Perishable Products Terminal Company (Terminal), was formed to take title to the terminal property, with the B&O and the Reading each receiving 250 shares of capital stock. The facility was dedicated to the handling of fruits, vegetables, dairy freight, and other perishable products.

The 23-acre Terminal was located on the B&O's Delaware Branch just south of the Snyder Avenue Yard, between Delaware Avenue (to the east) and Weccacoe Avenue (to the west). It extended from Jackson Street south to Ritner Street. The Cold Storage Warehouse was to the north with the Auction Sales Building just to the south. Further south were seven umbrella sheds in the Team Delivery Yard, with fifteen

24-car sidings for up to 360 cars, for the direct delivery of carload lots.

The facility was served by B&O tracks from Vandalia Street along Weccacoe Avenue, and by Philadelphia Belt Line (PBL) tracks from Delaware Avenue. The PBL provided access to the Port of Philadelphia in South Philadelphia to the B&O, the Reading, and the Pennsylvania Railroad.

The reinforced-concrete Auction Sales Building was 1000 feet long and 90 feet wide and featured covered loading platforms on each side. It had floor space for the handling of 150 carloads. Three 24-car house tracks served the building, allowing up to 72 cars to be unloaded at one time.

The Auction Sales Building was two stories high for a length of 136 feet on the Delaware Avenue end. The auction company's printing plant, the office of the joint railroad agent, and a restaurant for employees and auction attendees were

located on the first floor. The second floor contained the offices of the Philadelphia Auction Company, as well as two large auction rooms with seating for 200 and 250 persons. The auction rooms were equipped with an elevated rostrum for the auctioneer and clerk's table; the floor was sloped theater-style to give those present a clear view of the auctioneer.

The Cold Storage Warehouse was also of reinforced-concrete construction and included private sales facilities. It was intended for perishables not sold at auction and stretched for 900 feet. The cold storage facility was at the Delaware Avenue end and was eight stories high with seven being used for the refrigerated storage of fruits and vegetables. It had a capacity of approximately 1,300,000 cubic feet.

With the exception of space on the ground floor, reserved for joint use of the owning railroads, the cold storage facilities were leased to the Quaker City Cold Storage Company, an independent concern. The Auction Sales Building was connected to the second floor of the Cold Storage Warehouse by an enclosed walkway.

The Terminal was officially opened for business on November 1, 1926 although the Cold Storage Warehouse was not completed until May 1927. According to the minutes of an October 26, 1932 meeting of the President and Directors of The Baltimore and Ohio Railroad Company, the Philadelphia Terminal was constructed at a total cost of \$3,518,000, one-half of which was borne by the B&O.

Some idea of return on investment was provided at the same meeting where it was stated that the estimated cost of handling cars in this traffic at Philadelphia by car float prior to the construction of the new terminal was \$15.00 per car, versus \$8.00 with the new facilities. With 10,755 cars handled in 1931 and a savings of \$7.00 per car, a savings of over \$75,000 resulted that year.

The Pennsylvania Railroad quickly responded to competition in their own back yard, completing a large Produce Terminal less than a mile away at a cost of over \$6,000,000 in July 1927.



Construction of the Auction Sales Building, looking west from Delaware Avenue, August 3, 1926. The lunch wagon is advertising lemonade, root beer, ice cream, and hot dogs. (B&ORHS Archives)



Construction of the Auction Sales Building and the Cold Storage Warehouse, September 23, 1926. The buildings use concrete curtain wall and brick construction. Fish cakes are just 5 cents at the lunch wagon. (B&ORHS Archives)

Produce from as far as California (e.g., grapes) and Florida (e.g., citrus) would arrive at Eastside Yard and then be switched to the Terminal. Cars would be placed in the Team Delivery Yard early each morning alongside the team delivery sheds. About ten cases of fruit would be removed from each

car and placed on the platform alongside the car. Potential buyers walked along the platforms looking the fruit over to determine what they wished to bid on. Each car had a small card showing the lot number and its contents. Buyers were furnished with similar cards on which they could take notes.



The Team Delivery Yard is nearing completion, September 23, 1926. A string of Reading Company gondolas stands on Delaware Avenue. (B&ORHS Archives)



Taken from the top of a box car looking north along Delaware Avenue, the Auction Sales Shed (1) and the Auction Sales Building (2) are in full operation while the Cold Storage Warehouse (3) is still under construction. (B&ORHS Archives)