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President's Report to Members

Fellow Historians:

Spring is here and society activities are picking up. Starting with the RPM in Malvern, Pennsylvania, March 22 & 23, the society will have a sales presence. The Ohio Mini-Con will be May 4th in Grafton, Ohio; flyer is in this mailing. The Eastern Mini-Con will be at the society building on July 13th. If your region is having a special event this year and it is related to B&O, let me know.

The products from Bethlehem Car Works are now being produced. The ice breaker racks, B-8 baggage cars, and C-10 horse/theater cars will be in our hands soon. If you order them, they will be shipped soon. The new owner of BCW is eager to work with the society, and is looking forward to a new project by the end of the year. The tumbler project for society members went well and we are considering a different design for general public sale. The model committee is looking into general B&O structures; any suggestion is welcome. Send your suggestions to me. Atlas Trains announced a new run of the SD35s in two numbers with and without DCC sound-order from your favorite hobby pusher. We are working with several hobby producers and expect new announcements in the next couple of years.

Publications are progressing on two books. The St. Louis Division book is expected in the Fall for the Convention in

St. Louis. The draft on the second *B&O in Baltimore* book is done and the text is being reviewed. The diner/food service book is still in limbo. I have tried on several occasions and methods to retrieve the society resources from Joe Nevin's family with no success. The 2025 calendar is in the layout stages now and should be done by June. The *Sentinel* needs articles. Right now, there is no bank of articles, and we currently are working issue to issue. Please consider contributing to the society publication. We will provide help in reviewing text, finding images and drawings, and directing you to other resources.

The building expansion project is going well. Since the mailing request went out in January, we are now 25% towards our goal. All the rooms in the new building are named but there are still many file cabinets, shelves, and drawers yet to be claimed. Please seek friends, companies, and foundations to help with this project. The current building has had some serious maintenance issues the last several months. The elevator system had to be rebuilt and some parts had to be custom produced, but it is still much cheaper than a new system. We had to rebuild two valves on the steam heat system, which has reduced heating cost.

Finally, we need the membership to support our preparations and instituting activities for the upcoming bicentennial and

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 39)

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On the Covers

FRONT COVER: B&O GP7 3405, the sixth of seven such units, at the outbound home signal outside Chicago's Grand Central Station. The unit is equipped for passenger service with high-speed gearing and a steam generator with larger capacity water tanks. This required that the air tanks be mounted on the top of the hood leading to the nickname "Torpedo Boat Geep." The unit was numbered 745 when delivered in October 1953 and renumbered to 6698 in 1964. Photograph taken from Roosevelt Road overpass by J. David Ingles, circa 1960-64. (B&O RRHS Archives)

BACK COVER: A star filter provides an interesting addition to this image of the Great Stone Viaduct on October 27, 2023. It took three trips to capture an image with the light blue sky, but it was worth it. (Dwight Jones photograph)



Peat bogs were found on much of the route of the Chicago Division, such as this area near Deshler, Ohio, being cleared for the right of way in 1873. 396 trestles were required to cross the "puddles" which, if laid end to end, would have extended nine miles. (Photograph courtesy of Patrick Henry School District Public Libraries, Deshler, Ohio)

B&O Hotels

PART FOUR

By E. Ray Lichty

Images courtesy of the B&O RR Historical Society archives unless otherwise noted.

Part 1 of this series examined the first four hotels that were built, owned, or operated by the B&O.

Two were in Martinsburg West Virginia and one each in Grafton and Cumberland Maryland.

Part 2 of this series related the stories of three hotels in Maryland: Viaduct, Deer Park, and Oakland Resort.

Part 3 covered hotels in Ohio including Belpre, Newark, and Chicago Junction.

The Baltimore & Ohio Railroad wanted a link to the growing Chicago railroad gateway. To that end, the railroad formed several subsidiary companies. In 1872, it created one in Ohio and another in Indiana. Its Illinois subsidiary, the Baltimore, Pittsburgh and Chicago Railway, was created in 1873. In 1876, the Ohio and Indiana companies were consolidated to form the Baltimore and Ohio and Chicago Railroad, and simultaneously the Illinois company was renamed to match.

By state law, an Ohio company was required to have a resident as president.

Walter G. Quincy, general manager of the Trans-Ohio Division, was named president and B&O 2nd Vice President. William Keyser, was named managing director. Keyser was charged with building the Chicago line.

Keyser, one of Baltimore's wealthy elites, was an iron merchant. He owned and operated copper mines and refineries. B&O President John W. Garrett had sought for years to hire him to work for the railroad. Finally in 1871, with a promise that Keyser could take as much time as necessary away from the railroad to attend to his own

businesses, he became Garrett's 2nd Vice President. He was given responsibilities for operations and some aspects of finance, especially taxes. Keyser also served as Garrett's man for special projects, such as the Chicago Division.

The new rail line was to extend west from Chicago Junction, on the Newark-Sandusky line, to a location eight miles east of Chicago, called Baltimore Junction, in South Chicago.

The survey of the line, which began in 1873, was not easy. At the end of the last ice age, some 10,000 years ago, glaciers that

once covered northern Indiana receded, leaving a level plain and many square miles of peat bogs. These bogs were puddles, some so large they were nearly lakes. They were a major obstacle faced by the railroad. The bogs were at the approximate middle of the 262-mile-long rail line. The railroad built 396 trestles to cross the bogs. If laid end to end, these trestles would have stretched about nine miles. The line's construction started in 1873 and was completed in 1874.

As the line was nearing completion, the railroad looked for a site to change crews and locomotives. The B&O had earlier decided that the best distance between crew and locomotive changes was 100 miles. The Pennsylvania Railroad's similar Fort Wayne Road route to the south had longer runs between crew change points. After extensive discussion, the B&O decided two crews could cover the distance.

The closest town near the Milepost 128 midpoint was Auburn, Indiana, several miles to the east. The town was not chosen because it was too far east. West of the midpoint was the Tamarac (also spelled Tamarak) Swamp, a square-mile glacier "puddle" whose impact on the health of those living or working in the area was a concern. Several sites were considered between the swamp and Auburn. Until the final decision was made, thought was given to buying some of the farms under consideration, as they could be resold if not needed.

Keyser reviewed the B&O's charter and concluded, not surprisingly, that there was

no basis for the railroad to acquire land to speculatively create a town. He proposed to Garrett a scheme whereby Garrett and a few of his colleagues would create a joint stock company to acquire land for the purpose of creating the town of Garrett, and to acquire railroad land for its shops and rail facilities. Garrett was pleased with the town name and approved Keyser's scheme; however, he felt he should not be involved with the new company, reasoning he should not have a role in providing non-railroad facilities or services for his employees.

On November 13, 1874, the Baltimore Land and Improvement Company (BL&I Co.) was created, issuing 100 shares at \$100 each for a capitalization of \$100,000. The shares were purchased by John King, Jr., 1st Vice President, 35 shares; Keyser, 35 shares; W. C. Quincy, general manager of the Trans-Ohio division, 10 shares; John Cowen, chief attorney, 10 shares; and James Randolph, chief engineer, 10 shares. Keyser was the manager and treasurer of BL&I Co.

The responsibility for acquiring the property fell to Cowen, the attorney. He hired his father, Washington Cowen, an Indiana farmer, as a special agent. The railroad wanted to keep its intentions quiet as to the location of the new town. The elder Cowen, trying to be discreet, told landowners his family wanted to establish farms in the area and build a manor house. In two days, he bought twelve farms totaling 605½ acres, purchased at an average price

of \$50 an acre.

One of the deals was difficult to close. The owner, Christ Long, was considered mentally unbalanced. His one-story log cabin had a dirt floor, and he shared the indoor space with his pigs. He thought a surveyor's transit was a gun. Washington Cowen persisted. Finally, Long agreed to sell his 40 acres and demanded payment in gold.

It was not a done deal, however. Long's missing wife had to sign the sale documents. Years earlier, without a divorce, she eloped with another man. She took Long's team of oxen and a wagon. At the time of the sale, her whereabouts were unknown. Cowen hunted for her and found her two years later in Nebraska. He paid her \$15 to sign the deed of sale. After the sale was closed, Long refused to leave the Indiana parcel. The land company had to forcibly evict him.

In 1875, the town of Garrett was laid out by Beverly L. Randolph, son of James L. Randolph, the B&O's chief engineer. Fifty acres became the town. Eight of the parcels acquired were in Richland Township and the remaining four in Butler Township. To avoid any problems such a split could cause, a new township was created out of portions of the other two and named after Keyser.

Keyser named the streets of Garrett. Some were named after investors in the BL&I Co. Randolph became the main north-south street. King was the main east-west street. The town was laid out with 65-foot-wide streets and twelve lots

William Keyser, the Philanthropist

William Keyser made a healthy profit from his investment in BL&I Co. He also was a philanthropist, supporting numerous Baltimore causes. One of his leading efforts was saving Johns Hopkins University. The school was founded in 1876 in downtown Baltimore with funds from its namesake. At the end of the 19th century, the university was experiencing financial difficulties and its location in a growing downtown Baltimore was creating problems. Its future was uncertain.

Charles Carroll, of Carrollton, one of the nation's wealthiest individuals, gave his son, Charles, a wedding present of a large piece of property on the outskirts of Baltimore's center city. The gift included a mansion house completed in 1806, that became known as Homewood. In 1838, the estate was purchased by Saw

Wyman, Keyser's uncle. William Wyman inherited the property from his father. William Wyman, approaching the end of his life, discussed with Keyser options for the disposition of the estate.

In a complicated transaction, Keyser put together a deal whereby Wyman donated his 60-acre Homewood estate to the university with a portion pledged to the city for the creation of a park. That stipulation resulted in Wyman Park. It was designed by the famous landscape architect Frederick Law Olmstead. Keyser, aided by wealthy associates, assembled another 60-acre parcel which also was donated to the university. Together, they constitute the Homewood Campus of today's Johns Hopkins University.



The DeKalb House, with twenty-six bedrooms, was built in 1875, by the Baltimore Land & Improvement Co. A one-story annex on the east side of the building for servants indicated the hotel's clientele were of high economic status. The hotel's restaurant established itself as an outstanding place to dine and became famous in three states. (E. Ray Lichty collection)

in each city block. Washington Cowen set up an office in the two-story home of Samuel Lemon. Cowen's clerk was Dr. L. M. Sherman, the first physician in Garrett. Cowen continued to serve as the agent for BL&I Co., selling city lots.

Garrett was incorporated as a town in 1876 and a city 1883.

The first lot was sold on April 13, 1875, to Nathan Tarney who built a two-story house at the southeast corner of Cowen and Quincy Streets. He ran it as a boarding house for years. Within days, drug stores, a post office, and other businesses were under construction. By the end of 1875, nearly 300 structures had been built in Garrett.

The BL&I Co. built a two-story frame building as a boarding and lodging house on the southeast corner of Cowen and Keyser Streets. Called Chicago House, it opened in September 1875.

The first floor had a large dining room. Sleeping accommodations were on the second floor. Soon after it opened, the capacity was expanded with the addition of a smaller two-story frame house, south of the original structure.

Building a boarding house made sense as there were hundreds of workers in town building the roundhouse, railroad and commercial shops, business establishments, dwellings, and other structures. The boarding house could accommodate about 85 overnight guests. That was less than half of what was needed. There were some beds, but workers slept anywhere they could find floor space.

Since much of the work was done in shifts, the workers also slept in shifts. Each night at midnight, a bell was rung and there was a swap of spaces called "The Grand March." There was an understanding that anybody "in bed" at midnight had to leave when The Grand March began. The new arrivals scurried to find a bed or a spot on the floor. The shift change caused much commotion and drew complaints from neighbors of the rowdiness.

The roundhouse construction was completed in March 1876; but the boarding house continued to flourish due to other construction activity in town. It is not known when the boarding house ceased to operate, but the building was vacant in 1888.

The DeKalb House, a three-story brick structure with twenty-six bedrooms, was built in autumn 1875 by the BL&I Co. on lots owned by Keyser. There was a one-story annex on the east side of the building for servants, indicating the hotel's clientele were of high economic status. When the hotel opened on New Year's Day 1876, it was an "elaborate occasion, long to be remembered."

The hotel stood at the southeast corner of Randolph and Keyser Streets, three blocks south of the B&O crossing of Randolph Street. It featured modern conveniences of the day, including gas lights. The hotel's restaurant established itself as an outstanding place to dine and became famous in three states. John W. Garvey, a Chicago contractor, who built the railroad shops, also erected the hotel.

The hotel and restaurant were managed by N. & G. Ohmer, of Dayton, Ohio, with Christ Connecht in charge and a twenty-year-old Thomas Taggart as clerk. A Garrett history says the hotel was used by the BL&I Co. for its officials, employees, and passengers.

Over time, numerous changes in the



The DeKalb hotel is the tall building with chimneys in the distance on the left side of Randolph Street looking south. The B&O station hotel is behind the photographer on the southeast corner where Randolph Street crosses the B&O at grade. (E. Ray Lichty collection)



Opened on July 4, 1876, the depot had sleeping accommodations on the right side of the second floor which qualifies it as Garrett's third railroad hotel. The left end of the building was an office, The left door on the track side was the lunchroom and next the more formal dining room. The west two doors were access to the waiting and baggage rooms and the stairway to the second-floor telegraph office and sleeping accommodations. (Sidney Pepe collection)

ownership of DeKalb house were made, sometimes resulting in name changes for the hotel. The business was sold to John Uebar in 1905 and the name changed to Uebar Hotel.

The first passenger train arrived in November 1874. The first passenger station consisted of two coaches coupled to a baggage car. The baggage car was used as a kitchen. They were parked north of the main tracks just west of the Randolph Street crossing. Mr. Tubbs was in charge of serving both lunch and dinner.

On July 4, 1876, the B&O rail-car station was replaced with a fixed structure on the southeast corner at the crossing of Randolph Street. For most of its length, it was a one-story brick building with a slate roof and a second story over a portion of the west end of the building. The building had a single-story kitchen wing on the back of the depot towards town. The station was connected by a covered walkway to an outhouse.

As reported in the B&O's 50th Annual