

ISSN 1053-4415

The Sentinel



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

\$12.00

VOLUME 47, NUMBER 1

FIRST QUARTER 2025



**Restored St. Charles station on the former Katy line.
Visited at the Annual Convention in St. Louis Missouri.**

President's Report to Members

Happy New Year and I hope you had a wonderful and safe holiday season. Originally this letter was intended to be written by a guest author, but after a long and serious board meeting at St. Louis, several important topics and issues have developed over the past twelve months. Please take the time to read and reflect on each topic I will be presenting to you, the membership.

Operations: As the volunteers have begun to age with the youngest officer in his sixties and director in his forties, we need new blood to survive. Here is a clear example: when we purchased the new building, I was 61. For a whole year, I worked five to six days a week to get it ready for use. With the institution of a functional archives, we obtained eight to 15 new volunteers to organize the archive collection. Over the past ten years our collection has almost doubled and more is expected. Thus, the need for a storage building on the back parking area. These same new volunteers, however, are writing articles, doing train shows, maintenance on the building, writing books, developing model projects, and handling events at world headquarters. WE NEED HELP! Because of the lack of volunteers, simple repair and cleaning jobs have to be paid for, such as weeding flower beds, snow removal, dry mopping floors, dusting, cleaning restrooms, quick repairs and modifications, etc. None of these activities need any special skills and may need be done only once or twice a year.

Dues: A number of years ago we raised the dues calculating no increases for some years. With printing and *Sentinel* layout

costs experiencing big increases, two postal increases in 2024 and another two expected for 2025, however, we are not taking in enough funds to match expenses. Attempts are underway to reduce operating costs, but not major ones—every penny counts. We are working closely on controlling utility costs with heat repairs and HVAC management. Due to our collection, this is limiting any major changes to climate due to the age of historical documents. So, here are options under consideration: first change the *Sentinel* to all digital, second do two issues of *Sentinel* in an abbreviated digital format and two larger printed issues, or third raise dues and leave the *Sentinel* as currently distributed. With the first option we get rid of printing and mailing expenses and may reduce dues. With the second option we reduce the printing and mailing cost by 35% and leave the dues the same. The third option is a ten to fifteen dollar dues increase to cover costs. Some relief could come in a two tier dues structure with a dues reduction for those taking the digital issues and a slight increase for those wanting the printed *Sentinel*. All these options are being evaluated by the executive team, which is being led by Grant Berry, Vice-President, and Chris Winslow, Treasurer. Membership input should be directed to them through our post office box by February 28th.

Revenue: Our sales were down quite a bit last year. With the death of Joe Nevin, the dining-car book has been delayed, but Ken Wing has agreed to pick it up. Nick Fry has had many hurdles at his job and

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The official publication of
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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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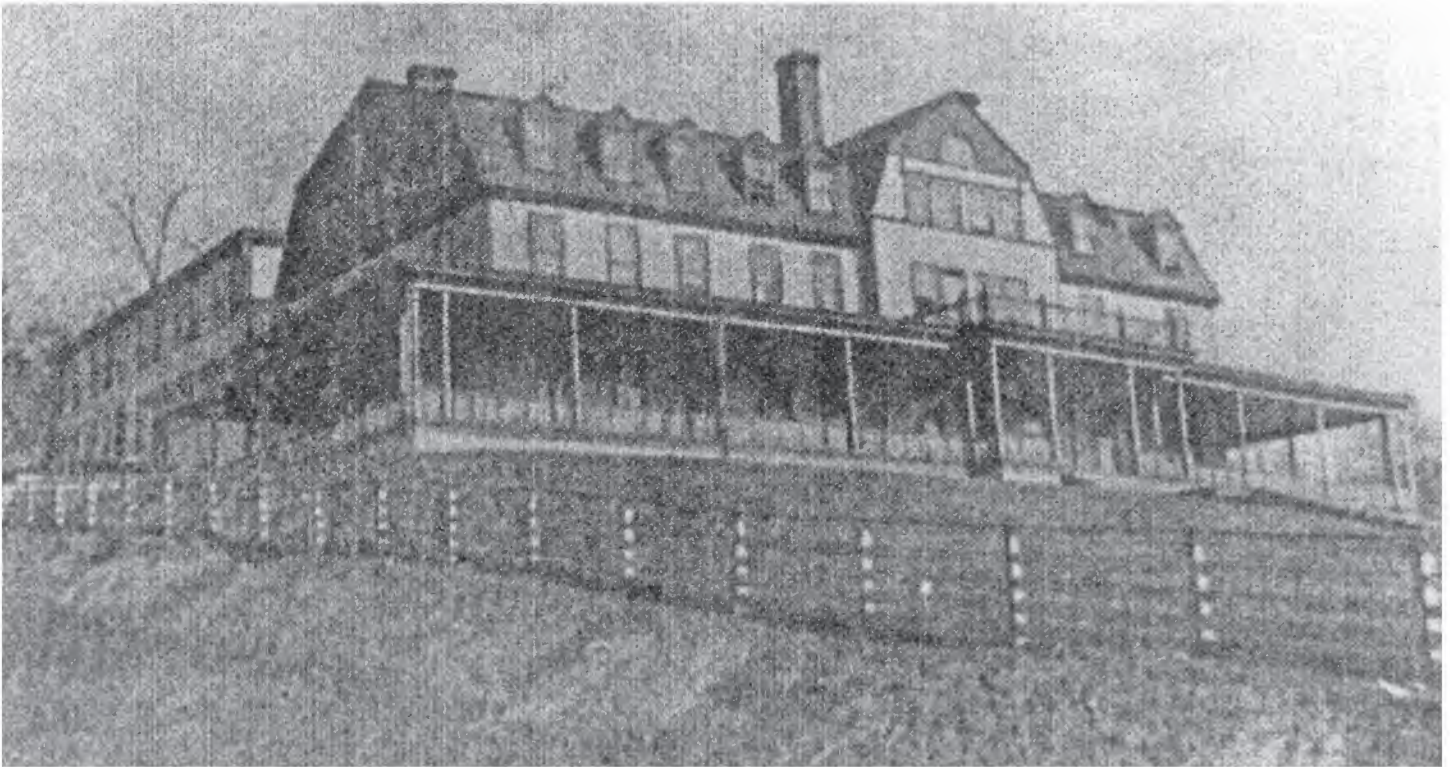
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BACK COVER: In 1902, John McGraw bought the Webster Springs Hotel from the B&O who had acquired it in the purchase of the West Virginia & Pittsburgh Railroad earlier that year. It is shown here after McGraw added many improvements to the hotel including a spa and 115 rooms bringing the total to 265 rooms.



The Camden resort hotel is in Camden-on-Gauley, West Virginia. B&O acquired the hotel when it leased/bought the West Virginia & Pittsburgh Railroad.

B&O Hotels

PART SIX

By E. Ray Lichty

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 in Grafton and one 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.

Part 4 covered hotels in Garrett Indiana.

Part 5 told the story of the Bay Ridge Resort Hotel in Bay Ridge, Maryland.

This part examines three more West Virginia hotels, provides updates on previously covered hotels and concludes the series.

The Camden Camden-on-Gauley, West Virginia

Central West Virginia was a rich coal and timber area. In addition to the mining and lumber businesses created to capitalize on these resources, towns sprang up to support these growing operations

One of the first railroads to serve the area was the West Virginia & Pittsburgh Railroad (WV&P), conceived and financed by Johnson Newlon Camden. He also founded the West Virginia & Pittsburgh Boom & Lumber Company (WV&PB&L Co.) to mill the timbers from his vast holdings in the area. (The term “boom” appears in the names of many mill companies. It means either a barrier in a river to collect or contain floating logs, or the contained collection.

In 1892, the WV&P line from Clarksburg, West Virginia arrived in Cowen, West Virginia. Ten miles beyond Cowen was the

town of Lanes Bottom, a flat area along the banks of the Gauley River. About a mile up the river was a spot called Gauley. Camden changed the name of Lanes Bottom to Camden-on-Gauley. He also changed the name of Gauley to Gauley Mills where he constructed a large sawmill that included two bandsaws. He incorporated the mill as the WV&PB&L Co. He later reorganized that company as the West Virginia & Pittsburgh Lumber & Manufacturing Company (WV&PL&M Co.).

He wanted to make Camden-on-Gauley a tourist attraction by building a resort hotel there. The hotel would be named “The Camden.” Visitors would generate passengers for his railroad.

The hotel was completed in 1893 a year after the railroad’s arrival. Camden-



WV&PB&L Co. built a two-band mill at Gauley Mills, West Virginia. (*Library of Congress*)

Johnson Newlon Camden 1828-1908



Johnson Newlon Camden
1828-1908. (*Library of Congress*)

Johnson Newlon Camden was a significant player in the economic history of West Virginia, or Virginia, which it was named when he started his career. Born in 1828, he attended the U.S. Military Academy at West Point for two years. Camden was admitted to the Virginia bar at age 23. He was involved in every West Virginia petroleum business, except one. Major projects included building an oil refinery at Parkersburg, and founding the First National Bank of Parkersburg. A partnership was formed from his oil interests with John D. Rockefeller's Standard Oil and he became a director of that company. He was a Democratic US Senator, representing West Virginia from 1881-1887 and 1893-1895.

Camden was involved with building 500 miles of railroad in the state, sometimes in partnership with Henry Gassaway Davis. Lines he built included: the B&O's Ohio River Subdivision between Parkersburg and Huntington; what became the Western Maryland Railway from Cumberland to Elkins; and the Coal & Coke Railway from Grafton to Charleston. Camden also built the West Virginia & Pittsburgh Railroad's line from Clarksburg to Cowen, and beyond to Richwood, West Virginia. This line eventually became a portion of the B&O's Richwood Sub-division. He founded the town of Newlon, West Virginia on the Pickens Branch.

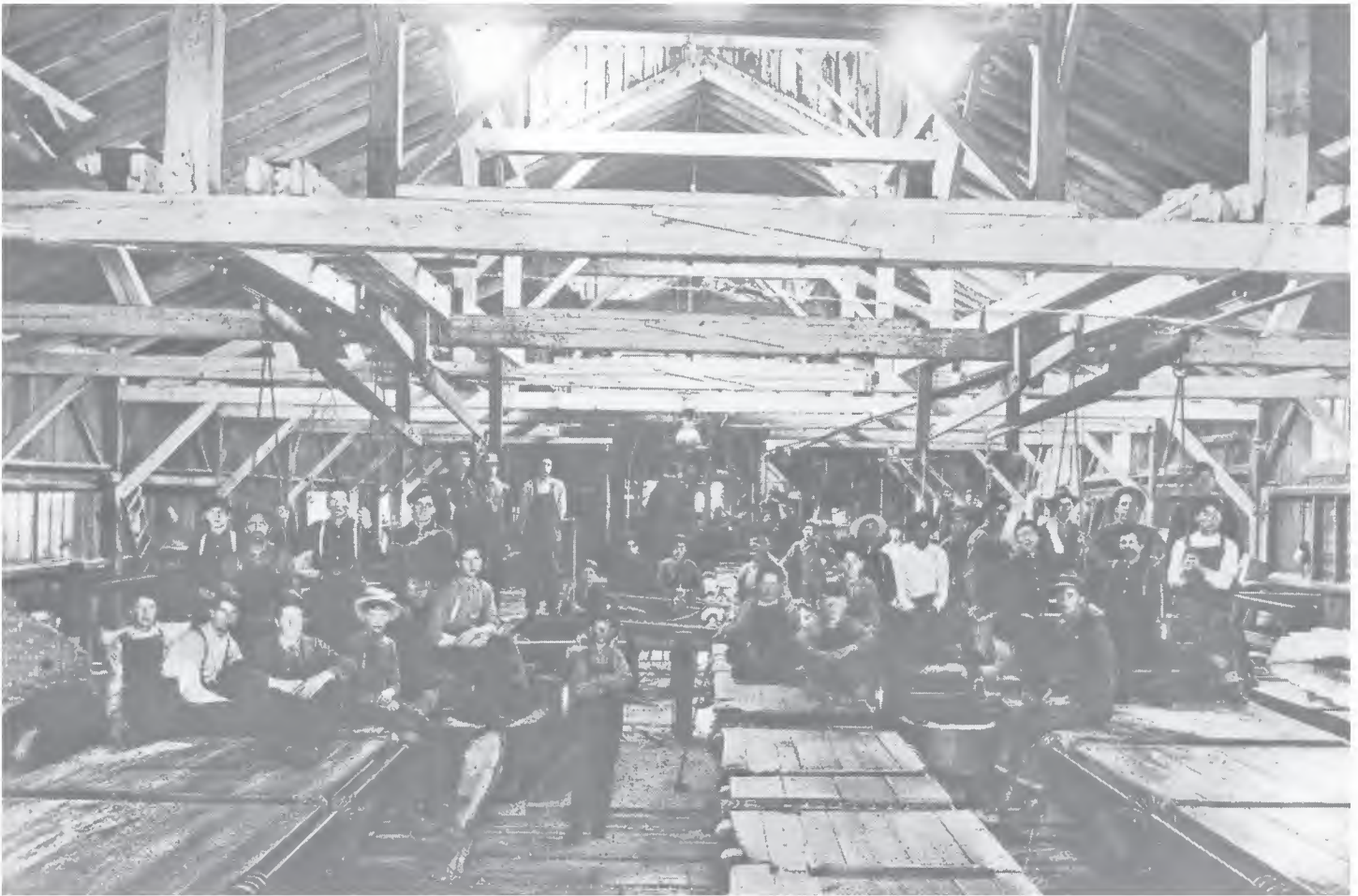
He died in 1908 at the Belvedere Hotel while on a visit to Baltimore. His estate was estimated at \$250,000,000. That is about \$7 billion in 2024 dollars.

on-Gauley quickly became a thriving community with many businesses, bars, casinos, and hotels.

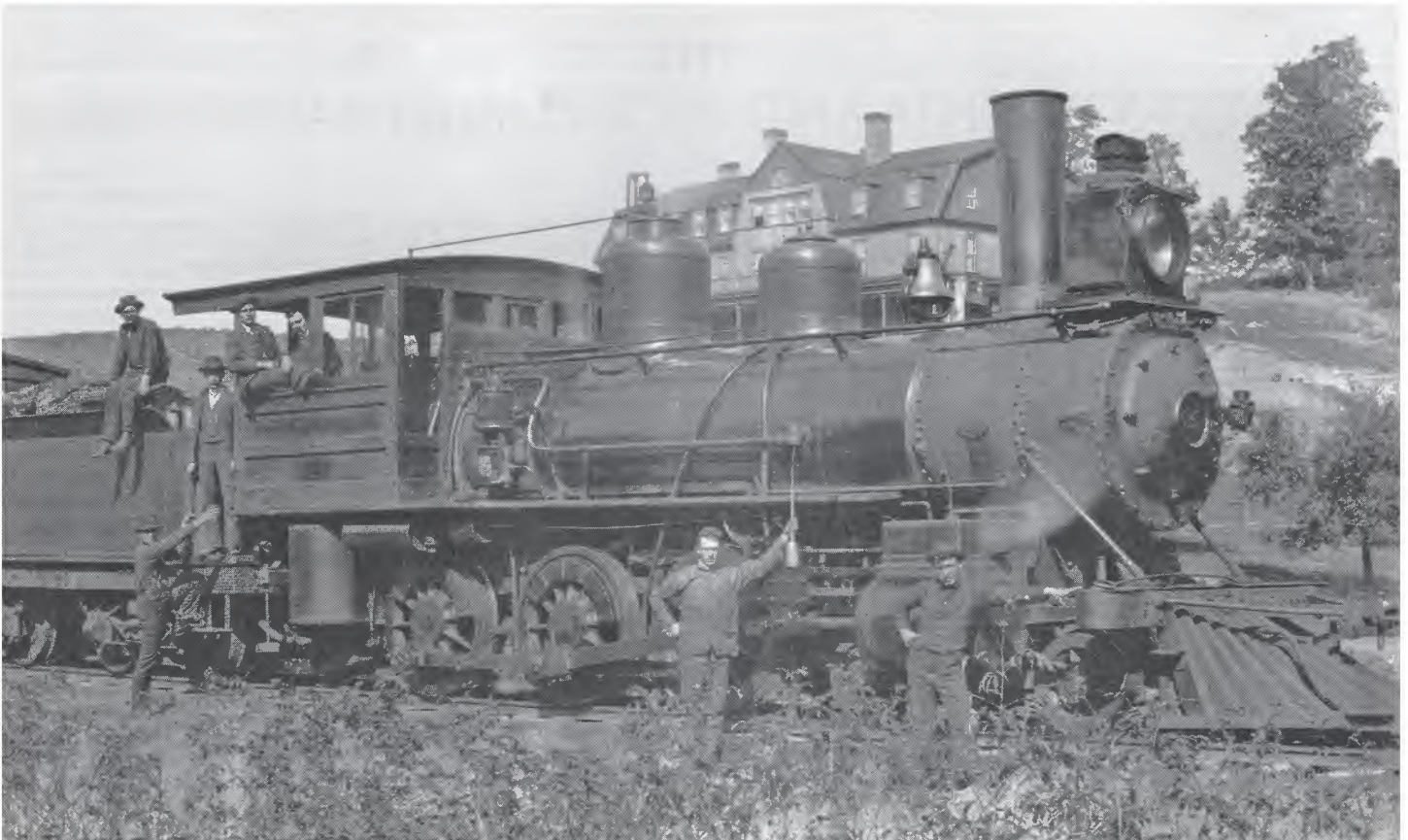
Camden used the capital of the railroad, in which he invested, to buy the real estate and build The Camden resort. This was accomplished using the Gauley Company, a WV&P wholly owned stock company.

The B&O, wanting to expand its network in the growing coal and lumber regions of south-central West Virginia, built or acquired various rail lines in the area around Cowen. While still under construction, the B&O leased the WV&P for 999 years in 1890. That lease essentially served as the B&O's acquisition of the WV&P. Camden continued to run the railroad until his death in 1908. The B&O acquisition included the Gauley Co. and The Camden, a roughly 100-room hotel with a wraparound porch on three sides.

The three-story wooden building sat atop a hill with a view of the Gauley River. It looked down upon the railroad station at the river's edge. There was a wing on the back containing kitchen and support facilities. The furnishings cost \$6,000. Despite its bucolic location, the resort lacked the luxuries possessed by some of its mountain competitors. They had mineral springs for baths and "the cure." As a resort hotel, its clientele was not expected to be workers and tradesmen toiling nearby in



The employees of the sawmill, known as "Woodsies," in one of the mill buildings at Gauley Mills. *(Library of Congress)*



Posed in 1895 in front of The Camden hotel at Camden-On-Gauley is West Virginia & Pittsburgh's 14 (B&O 226).

(Collection of Jerry Cobb)

the timber and mining operations.

The WV&PB&L Co.'s workers at Gauley Mills, known as "Woodsies," came to Camden-on-Gauley to visit its bars and other attractions. They would become so drunk they could not get back to work on time the next day. To solve the labor problem, the mill company built a bar in Gauley Mills so the workers could get drunk closer to the job.

To offset the negative image and enhance the reputation of the resort,

Camden hired a minister who published a religious newspaper and supervised the construction of a large church called the "Tabernacle." These efforts failed to solve the problems and consequently things didn't work out for The Camden resort.

While The Camden enjoyed some early prosperity, it was neither a financial nor social success. Camden was happy to dispose of it as a part of the lease (sale) of the WV&P to the B&O.

The B&O found itself with an

unprofitable resort that was too far from the Cowen rail terminal to integrate into railroad operations.

The B&O leased the hotel to O. F. Williams in 1899. It is believed that the railroad operated the hotel for some years. When the hotel operations were closed is not known. The B&O sold the hotel building, circa 1930, to the local school district, which converted it to the Camden Grade School. Later, it was a furniture store. The building was dismantled, circa 1970.

Finding the Story

While reporting on the Oakland Hotel in Oakland, Maryland, the Garrett County Historical Society provided a 1901 newspaper article announcing that the company Charles Headley represented would be leasing the Oakland Hotel. His hotel resume included having managed "The Grafton" hotel, in Grafton, West Virginia, and "The Camden" hotel, in Gauley, West Virginia. That was the first hint either of these hotels existed. The story of The Grafton was told in Part 3 of this series.

An investigation of Gauley revealed that it was a Webster County town, on the Gauley River. It was 9 miles from Cowen, a terminal on the B&O's Richwood Line, named after John K. Cowen, 11th President of the railroad. Cowen is 121 rail miles from Grafton.

Nicholas Fry, archivist of the B&O Railroad Historical Society

and curator of the John W. Barriger III National Railroad library at the University of Missouri in St. Louis, conducted an internet search. He found a Webster County, West Virginia, reference to a measurement station at Camden-on-Gauley in the 1929 book, *Magnetic Declination in Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia, Kentucky, and Tennessee*. The information listing the exact location of the measurement station read, in part, "The station is on the terrace of the hotel of the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad Company on a hill above the railroad station in the southeast part of town." This was independent evidence that there was a B&O hotel in Camden-on-Gauley. It was less certain the B&O's hotel was "The Camden" as there were others in town; however, "The Camden" met the description listed, including that it was on a hill behind the B&O station and had a terrace.



Holly Jct. was the connection between the West Virginia & Pittsburg (later B&O), and the Holly River & Addison Railroad (later the West Virginia Midland). The scheduled arrival of WVM's *Sutton Flyer*, on the left, met the B&O's train from Richwood headed for Grafton. Today, this area is under the waters of the 1961 man-made Sutton Lake.