

The Sentinel



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The Royal Blue

The B&O Fights for New York Passengers

'That Lady Engineer'

Olive Dennis Set Precedents and Styles



LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

First Step; What is Next?

Before we get into the meat of this letter let us reflect on the last three months.

I have been at both the Prototype Meet at Malvern, Pennsylvania, and the Western Mini-Con at Columbus, Ohio. Many thanks to John Howard for organizing an outstanding day of learning. At both locations the society had a good representation and the company store did well. Thank you for your support of the store, for the profits keep the archive collection going.

Henry Freeman and Chris Tilley headed to Spencer, North Carolina, for the Streamliner Days the last weekend in May to show the flag. Bruce Elliott, Henry Freeman, and I will be manning a booth at the National Model Train Show in Cleveland, Ohio, July 18-20, so if you are in the area stop by and say hi.

We have upgraded our computer for the archives and company store and purchased a new 11 by 17 scanner to scan large-format negatives and pictures. The weekend of May 17-18 saw all the computer stations in the archives in use and much work completed. Soon we will be using a commercial data base storage and search system to catalog our collections. It may take a year or more, but we are hoping to have the data on line somewhere within that time frame. Chris Winslow has upgraded the system and is working with our new system provider.

Wade Rice has made contact with the Reading Railroad Technical and Historical Society and we will be doing a joint Mini-Con in the Philadelphia area during the summer of 2015. Keep

in mind this year's Eastern Mini-Con is in Martinsburg, West Virginia, this August. If you never attended either of the Mini-Cons, even for a half day, they are worth it.

Finally the annual convention will be in Cumberland, Maryland, this September. Henry Freeman and Andy White have an exciting program for the long weekend with at least a rail trip on the South Branch Valley Railroad; see the flyers or check the Society's on-line site.

Now to the heart of the letter. In the last issue of the *Sentinel* we announced our building fund project. A donation form is listed on the Society's website with six levels of contributions. If every member donated \$350 to the fund we would exceed our current goal. The best thing about meeting this contribution of \$350 is you can pay over time. I know some of you are having a tough time economically but any amount will help to expand and preserve our collection. With all my heart thank you in advance for your support.

The next step in securing a new building comes in three forms: foundation grants, corporate grants, and political grants. There are some private individuals who support non-profit historical organizations. If you know of someone, reach out, talk with them, share your love for the railroad and ask for their financial support. The worst they can say is no; thank them for their time and move on.

As mentioned last issue corporations offer matching funds, so check with your employer and also ask if they have grant

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ON THE COVERS

FRONT COVER: Quick quiz—which of these never ran in revenue service on the B&O? Answer on page 35. (Henry Freeman photograph)

BACK COVER: Never shy about promotion, the B&O took advantage of printing developments to make *Royal Blue* literature more eye-catching. (Frank A. Wrabel collection)



B&O P-3 Number 5100, a Pacific virtually fresh from its builder, Baldwin, hustles its train through Holmes, Pennsylvania, just southwest of Philadelphia on the Royal Blue Line. The locomotive was built in July 1913; this photo was taken December 6 of that year. Number 5100 was scrapped in 1948.

The Royal Blue Line

B&O Battles the PRR for Passengers

By Frank A. Wrabel

Illustrations From the Author's Collection

To many, the *Royal Blue* name represented the epitome of first-class rail travel. To some the *Royal Blue* represented a misguided business adventure that cost the B&O dearly. By all accounts, however, the Royal Blue Line theme achieved high-profile brand recognition for the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad generations before the advertising profession promoted the phrase.

Today, more than 50 years since the last elegant blue and gray consist polished B&O rails between Washington and New York, the *Royal Blue* legend remains so intense that it is passionately recalled by a generation that was never able to experience the amenities of this service and can barely recall the best years of the B&O itself. Despite the fickle shifts

in travelers' loyalties and the enormous changes that have shaped today's rail passenger network, the advances in service and technology that the B&O introduced by way of the Royal Blue Line remain milestones in railroad passenger service. The Royal Blue Line legacy is also lasting testimony to the resourcefulness and determination of B&O management and its dedicated workforce.

That strong sense of determination was evident shortly after the Civil War when it became clear that New York would be the leading East coast port and B&O President John W. Garrett felt compelled to somehow change course and send the B&O east. In a very real sense, Garrett was now fighting a war on two fronts: the expansion and perfection of the B&O

west and this new drive east. Garrett and the B&O, however, experienced a succession of false starts pursuing this eastern initiative before a plan came together. Unfortunately that plan was shaped from a defensive rather than offensive posture.

Historic record also suggests that the resourcefulness and the milestones later achieved were products of desperation as the Garretts and the B&O tried to recover lost ground late in the game after losing control of a well-established rail route between Baltimore and Philadelphia to the Pennsylvania Railroad in 1881. Worse yet, they had underestimated the business acumen and ample treasury of their powerful competitor and later entered a costly and largely one-sided race for traffic with the PRR between Washington and New York.



Before there were second-generation diesels, there were tunnel motors, put in service to move B&O steam-powered trains through Baltimore's Howard Street Tunnel without suffocating passengers and crew. These two were photographed at HU Tower in 1938, near the end of their service.

Forced to build a new and expensive line on its own, the B&O quickly grasped every new construction method and form of technology that appeared to complete and operate this new line and then advanced to capture the attention of the traveling public.

This new route proved challenging to construct and perfect. When partially completed between the northern section of Baltimore and Philadelphia for freight service in 1886, B&O's new line east of Baltimore lacked a direct rail connection to the mainline at Camden Station yards. To inaugurate through freight and later passenger service, B&O trains operated to a pier at Locust Point. From there, locomotives and cars were ferried across the Baltimore Harbor to a B&O pier in Canton, where the train sets were reassembled to continue their journey east.

To improve this time-consuming and costly operation, the B&O incorporated the Baltimore Belt Railroad to construct a direct rail connection through the City of Baltimore to connect with the new line in the northeast portion of the city. This construction proved to be especially challenging since the B&O was forced to build in Baltimore its longest tunnel, the

1.4-mile Howard Street Tunnel (1890-1895), and then find suitable motive power to operate through this long bore. The solution came in the form of the first mainline railroad electrification in the U.S. This first also demonstrated to the railroad world that the well-established pioneering spirit of the B&O was very much alive.

For the next 40 years, the smoke-free Howard Street Tunnel and the electric tunnel motor service (Camden Station to the Waverly neighborhood in Baltimore's northeast) offered passengers an attractive alternative to the PRR's service through the smoke-filled B&P Tunnel several blocks away. At the east end of the tunnel, B&O built, without question, the most elegant passenger station in Baltimore. Mt. Royal Station, built in 1895 and 1896, was noted for its hominess that would forever characterize the B&O passenger service at large and the genteel nature of Baltimore's Southern orientation.

Heading east, B&O engineers also had to conquer a hillier terrain than the competing PRR route to the south and then bridge the Susquehanna River.

The first bridge required expansion to accommodate two tracks and general

strengthening by 1907. B&O had no choice but to keep the bridge open for traffic while the construction work progressed, but the work compromised the structure and the bridge collapsed under the weight of a coal train on September 23, 1908.

The ever-resourceful B&O negotiated an awkward connection with the PRR between Havre de Grace and Perryville until the replacement bridge, the longest on the B&O system at 6,109 feet, was completed on January 6, 1910, and B&O service continued uninterrupted.

B&O rails had ended in Philadelphia as a result of pressures from leaders in the financial community who were increasingly concerned about railroads overbuilding in the east and the probable rate wars that would ensue. B&O astutely extended its reach east beyond Philadelphia by creating joint trackage agreements with the Philadelphia & Reading (P&R) and Central Railroad of New Jersey (CNJ) to complete the steel raceway to New York.

Later, B&O President Leonor F. Loree (1901-1904) believed that this partnership was essential to his road's future and made a substantial investment in the



Number 1447, an A-3, pulls its train east in the Philadelphia area in this 1911 photograph. Like the 5100 pictured on page 3, this 4-4-2 is nearly new, having been built by Baldwin in May 1910.

P&R. The P&R, in turn, controlled the CNJ to protect this working relationship.

Unfortunately, the CNJ terminated in Jersey City and B&O passengers were forced to transfer from the train to ferryboat in Jersey City to complete the journey to New York City and this, after PRR tunneled under the Hudson River, would prove to be a persistent weakness of the B&O service.

The B&O created a classic motif for this new route that reinforced Maryland's lineage to England and Old World royalty by selecting the *Royal Blue* name. The color that dominated the advertising campaign and adorned the locomotives and passenger cars also underscored the B&O commitment to quality and detail.

One-time B&O executive George Shriver recalled that B&O President Charles F. Mayer personally reviewed an extensive number of colors before selecting one from Europe that was identified as *Royal Saxony Blue*, and a legend was born.

B&O also selected only the latest and finest passenger equipment that the Pullman Company could deliver to support this new service. The Baldwin Locomotive Works, a favorite B&O supplier and on-line customer at Eddystone, Pennsylvania, was constantly called on to deliver newer types of high-driven passenger locomotives that would establish speed records hauling the Royal Blue Line trains between Washington and New York. Speeds in the 80-90 mph range were the

hallmark of B&O's creation. The five-hour *Royal Limited*, inaugurated in 1898, competed head-on in opulence and speed with PRR's famous *Congressional Limited*.

In terms of physical plant and image, the B&O built well. The new, heavily ballasted double track mainline between Baltimore and Philadelphia was long regarded as the best-engineered division on the entire B&O system. Much of the plant would not need extensive improvements for several generations. Some of the later replacement bridges were of masonry construction, including the impressive multi-arch viaduct over the Brandywine River in Wilmington.

B&O's new Philadelphia Division (much later, Baltimore Division—East

Dennis was responsible not only for the locomotive streamlining design, but also for the entire train interior. These postcard views show how she merged design aesthetics with passenger comfort. The observation lounge car [right] featured a boattail end with its wraparound windows and some rear-facing chairs so travelers could see where they'd been.



Two coaches with freshly designed reclining seats [left] were in the train's five-car consist. The railroad took the opportunity on this card to tout the presence of stewardesses on its trains.



The coffee shop car [right] functioned as a second lounge car and gathering point for those interested in light eating. Like the rest of the consist, there were Venetian blinds shown at the windows, a major improvement over standard coach blinds.



The dining car [left], of course, featured the white tablecloths that are de rigueur for any high-class eating establishment, along with the silver coffee pots and good china. And if memory serves, the *Cincinnatian* was the only B&O train from which one could really enjoy the food while viewing the scenery of the West End of the Cumberland Division, as most passenger traffic went through there at night. (Postcards courtesy of William F. Howes)