Last Locomotive
Built for B&O Retired
See page 3
Ah, the warm days of summer and no snow to clear. Hope everyone has a safe and wonderful summer season. The Society continues to progress toward our goal of educating and preserving the history of the B&O. Recently, we acquired an extremely large slide and photo collection from one of our charter members; I will leave the details for Grant’s archives report. I made the trip to Columbus, Ohio for the Western Mini-Con and quite enjoyed myself, except for the seven-hour road trips out and back. The attendance was lower than normal due to a post office delay with Sentinel mailing. We will correct that for next year by mailing earlier. The 2020 calendar is available for sale, but we reduced the press run, so get your order in quickly!

I have been in communication with the B&O Museum in Baltimore about several topics. First, we are going to make a stronger effort to share upcoming activities for each other through social media and mailings. Second, we have been requested to help the museum with organization and structuring of their archives. Since they currently do not have an archivist or collection curator, they need outside assistance and were impressed with what we have accomplished. Third, I have been asked to participate on the museum Board of Trustees, and will have made a presentation to them by the time you read this letter. But, just to make things clear, the first mission of the Society is to care and provide for the membership. Cooperation on both our parts will be greatly beneficial for all parties in the future. We are just starting the talking stage, but I will keep you informed.

The B&O in Baltimore book is wrapping up with only the review of the last three chapters remaining. As of this date, everything on the book is on schedule. At the last minute, a large number of color images have been received, and we made some changes to include more in the book. A special thanks go to the following archive volunteers for their countless hours on the book: Brian Rochon, Joe Nevin, Al McEvoy, Don Plotkin, Wally Figiel, Skip Nichols, Mike Williams, Traver Stavac, Craig Close, and Greg Smith. This team researched, (CONTINUED ON PAGE 39)

In This Issue

LAST LOCOMOTIVE BUILT FOR B&O RETIRED by Dwight Jones ........................................... 3
UNION-MANAGEMENT COOPERATION ON THE B&O by Kennard Wing .................... 16
MYSTERY PHOTOGRAPH ................................................................. 19
LOCUST POINT MARINE TERMINAL ........................................................................... 20
WHITE MARSH, MARYLAND FREIGHT HOUSE by Brian Rochon ......................... 22
STANLEY BENNER: Memories from the Left and Right Side of the Cab by Mike Shylanski ....... 23
THE AUDITION: How I got a dispatcher’s job on the B&O in the 1960s by Thomas White ...... 29
RUNNING LIGHT ......................................................................................... 35
ARCHIVE CENTER AND BUILDING REPORT ..................................................... 38
MYSTERY PHOTOGRAPH ............................................................................... 39

On the Covers

FRONT COVER: Photographer Olev Taremae captured B&O’s last locomotive fulfilling Arch McElvany’s plan of a single unit on an eastbound coal train at Cumberland, Maryland, on October 13, 1984. The new SD50 had been in service just over a month. (Collection of Dwight Jones; image used with permission of original photographer)

BACK COVER: B&O 98 heading east at Dolton, Illinois, at approximately the same spot the Westerner once stalled in the opposite direction when it ran out of fuel. See the article on Page 29 for the story.
Three SD50s shove an eastbound coal train at Amblersburg, West Virginia, on October 31, 1985. Assisting B&O's last locomotive, 8595, is sister units 8590 and 8593, three SD50s replacing four SD35s. Up front is lead unit demonstrator EMD4 and C&O 8624, first unit from C&O's last order of 20 units. (Photograph by Dwight Jones)

Last Locomotive Built for B&O Retired

By Dwight Jones

The last locomotive built for the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad recently was retired by CSX, bringing to an end a nearly 200-year chapter in the motive power history of America’s first common carrier railroad. This history dated from the venerable Tom Thumb of 1830 to a mammoth 3500-horsepower SD50 giant from 1984.

I had hoped this last B&O locomotive would find its final resting place at the B&O Railroad Museum, keeping company with the museum’s Tom Thumb reproduction (the author applied a DO NOT DISMANTLE museum stencil to the unit in April 1994). Unfortunately, the unit later was repainted by CSX and the museum stencil was not retained on the new scheme. Over the years the unit’s special history disappeared into the ranks of the large CSX fleet, and it was unceremoniously sold in late 2018 to used-locomotive dealer Larry’s Truck Electric at Lordstown, Ohio, along with 14 other former B&O SD50s, accounting for 75% of the B&O SD50 fleet.

SD50 HISTORY

General Motors’ Electro-Motive Division (EMD) built some prototype SD50s in 1980 with the model being formally introduced in May 1981. The heritage of the CSX SD50 fleet began with Seaboard System purchasing 53 SD50s in 1983-1984 numbered 8500 to 8552. C&O units came next in 1984 and were numbered 8553 to 8575. These would be the first units built for B&O. Seaboard got an additional 28 units next in 1984 (8596 to 8623), with a final C&O order of 20 units numbered 8624 to 8643. The 8631 gained notoriety by appearing in a dynamic photo at the east end of the Mt. Royal station tunnel at Baltimore that was used in the 1985 CSX Annual Report. Other SD50s came with CSX’s partial acquisition of Conrail.

The first batch of C&O units was sent for service on the B&O in the West Virginia mountains, including helper service on the grades between Grafton and Keyser. An extensive report by the author on the initial arrival of these units can be found in future CSX combining of the locomotive fleets of the lines. B&O units came next in 1984 with 20 units numbered 8576 to 8595. These would be the last units built for B&O. Seaboard got an additional 28 units next in 1984 (8596 to 8623), with a final C&O order of 20 units numbered 8624 to 8643. The 8631 gained notoriety by appearing in a dynamic photo at the east end of the Mt. Royal station tunnel at Baltimore that was used in the 1985 CSX Annual Report. Other SD50s came with CSX’s partial acquisition of Conrail.

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The B&O's last locomotive is compared to the Tom Thumb, a reproduction of B&O's first locomotive.

This graphic compares the size of B&O's last locomotive with that of the Tom Thumb, a reproduction of B&O's first locomotive.

(Dwight Jones)

The B595 is shown arriving at Grafton, West Virginia, at the yard office, as the second unit on an empties train on September 15, 1984. The unit is only one month old. At this era the only technology on the roof of the cab is a single radio antenna.

(Photograph by Dwight Jones)

the March 1984 C&O Historical Newsletter, including several photos. The delivery of the 20 B&O units saw them sent to the same territory, all being assigned initially to Cumberland for maintenance. An article in Chessie News announced the purchase of the 20 new units, part of a 42-unit CSX order with the other 22 units going to Sea-}

This graphic compares the size of B&O's last locomotive with that of the Tom Thumb, a reproduction of B&O's first locomotive.

board. The announcement indicated that “The new locomotives have an advanced modular control system which utilizes integrated circuitry, a new dynamic brake arrangement, and a radar system designed to reduce engine wheel slip and provide more adhesion. They are more fuel efficient than older models now being used. They will pull Chessie coal trains moving to electric utility plants and other industries in the Midwest and Southeast, and to coal export terminals on the East and Gulf coasts.” In reality some of these characteristics did not live up to their billing.

The original per-unit cost for the 20 B&O SD50s was just under one million
On April 14, 1985, SD50 8595 is shown in this broadside view at the M&K Junction helper station at Rowlesburg, West Virginia. (Photograph by Dwight Jones)

An employee is seen servicing the 8595 at the M&K Junction facility on April 14, 1985. (Photograph by Dwight Jones)

The 8595 is shown at Columbus on April 16, 1994, wearing its first CSX paint scheme, which has been described as the Yellow Nose 2 scheme (YN2). (Photograph by Dwight Jones)
dollars at $932,213, slightly more than was paid for the C&O engines. At the time the prices were regarded as very good, likely because of the many trade-in engines provided. B&O’s EMD order number, 837081, with the third digit of “7,” indicated use of remanufactured parts in the new units. The following older 80 units were reported as trade-in stock on the B&O SD50s:

4  B&O GP7s
37 B&O GP9s
10 Western Maryland
   GP7 and GP9 units
29 C&O GP7 and GP9 units

All 20 B&O SD50s were reported as delivered by Labor Day 1984.

B&O’s last locomotive, 8595, carries an official build date of August 1984. It served the railroad for nearly 35 years until its recent retirement.

Chessie System’s Chief Mechanical Officer, Locomotive, issued a report dated March 10, 1986, indicating that Baltimore & Ohio six-axle diesel ownership consisted of 5 SD7 locomotives, 10 SD9 units, 5 SD20-2 units [Ed. Note: rebuilt from SD35], 15 SD35 units (all listed as leased), 24 SD40 and SD40-2 units, and the 20 new SD50 units, all 20 of which were reported as leased and rated at 3500 horsepower. B&O’s total locomotive fleet was reported as 836 plus two slugs. These 79 six-axle units accounted for only 9.4% of the total B&O fleet. B&O was definitely a four-axle railroad. Interestingly, during the CSX era, almost all new power has been six-axle.

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This closeup view shows the stencil applied by the author for the B&O Museum, photographed at Columbus, Ohio, on April 16, 1994. (Photograph by Dwight Jones)