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The Sentinel



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FIRST QUARTER 2022



- 1966 Circle Trip
- 1940s Employee Hero

- 2021 Convention
- 1832 Excursion

Message from the President

Happy New Year Fellow Members!

It is now 2022 and all our hopes are for a normal year of operations. That being said, we are instituting a dues increase. A letter of explanation is included with this mailing giving the reasons the board approved this increase; please read it carefully. It was a difficult decision and the decision was not made lightly, but we hope any further increase should not be needed for at least several years.

The 2021 Fall season was very busy for the society and here is what was accomplished by the volunteers working to provide for you the members. The Annual Convention was conducted in Akron, Ohio and was attended by over 70 people. We had a day of presentations on Thursday evening and all day Friday. On Saturday we had the tour of the Goodyear blimp hangar and the locomotive collection at the Age of Steam in Sugar Creek, Ohio. The annual business meeting was held on Sunday. To Andy White and all the volunteers, thank you for producing a great event.

The next event was the semi-annual cleaning and maintenance day at the building. We were done in about 4 hours and many thanks to the archival crew who gave their time and resources to clean the site. If you are in the area on either work weekends this year, drop me a line. See schedule of events enclosed with this *Sentinel*.

The MER-NMRA held their convention at Hunt Valley, Maryland, and the society had a table to sell our wares and promote the society. For two and half days we sat there with little return for our efforts. We did pick up a couple of members. It is important that we reach out to more people to encourage more membership to keep us going. Please give it a try at least once a year; we will provide materials for you.

In November we held our second Model Train Flea Market. We had 14 vendors and a large collection of donated materials for sale by the society. The attendance was fair and a more extensive promotional effort is needed to improve the gate receipts. Next year's flea market is on the schedule of events. If you are in the area and want to buy or sell, stop by.

Over the past year I have made five road trips to collect contributions towards the society's archive. These trips included two trips to Hyndman, Pennsylvania, one to Huntington, West Virginia, one to Charlottesville, Virginia, and one to Parkville, Maryland. Can you get saddle sores from all that driving? Additional information about the new items is in the archives report.

As of this writing there is no one to take over the editor job for the *Modeler*. Although we promoted the *Modeler* on

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 39)

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In This Issue

| | |
|---|----|
| BY CIRCLE TRIP BY BOB WITHERS..... | 3 |
| A TALE OF UNRECOGNIZED HEROISM—FROM 80 YEARS AGO BY TOM BOLTZ..... | 18 |
| BORHS 2021 CONVENTION: ARKON BY ALLEN YOUNG | 21 |
| 100 YEAR AGO ON THE B&O CURATED BY BRIAN ROCHON | 26 |
| NARRATIVE OF AN EXCURSION ON THE B&O BY CHARLES VARLE INTRODUCTION BY JACK WALSH | 27 |
| MYSTERY PHOTO | 32 |
| FROM THE ARCHIVES CURATED BY BRIAN ROCHON | 33 |
| RUNNING LIGHT | 35 |
| ARCHIVE CENTER AND BUILDING REPORT..... | 39 |

On the Covers

FRONT COVER: B&O E8A 1447 and E7A 1416 are ready to depart St. Louis with a 10-car *George Washington*—which Bob Withers, who will soon be on board, will always refer to as the *National Limited*—at 9:10am Wednesday, January 26, 1966.

(Photograph by Bob Withers)

BACK COVER: B&O 344, Class Q-3, Tioga, West Virginia, April 7, 1957.

(Rodney Peterson Collection/B&O Railroad Historical Society Archives)

My Circle Trip

By Bob Withers

Photographs by the author



C2507, coupled to the end of 35-car “mixed” Train 104, awaits its only passenger during a surprise snowfall at 4:15pm on Saturday, January 22, 1966. It sits beside C&O’s Georgian-styled 1913 Huntington passenger station.

The Baltimore & Ohio Railroad Company was always the weaker sister in Huntington, West Virginia. As I was growing up, Chesapeake & Ohio’s *George Washington*, *Sportsman*, and *Fast Flying Virginian* whisked passengers in and out of town by the hundreds. In nearby Kenova, Norfolk & Western’s bullet-nosed Class J 4-8-4’s eased Tuscan-red coaches, sleepers and observation cars of the *Pocahontas*, *Powhatan Arrow*, and *Cavalier* across its massive Ohio River bridge with beauty and streamlined grace.

All the while, B&O’s distinctive Class Q-3 light USRA Mikados—excuse me, MacArthurs—and Class P-6a Pacifics lumbered in and out of Huntington with overnight freight trains 92 and 93, mixed locals 81 and 82, and two- or three-car passenger trains between Pittsburgh, Parkersburg, and Kenova.

There were those in Huntington who thought that was all there was to B&O, but as a sixth-grader who made many friends among crews switching at Guyandotte’s four-car siding, I knew there was *more* to B&O. I heard stories about royal blue streamliners, Timesaver freights, and mountain helper stations. I was determined to see it all someday!

That moment came during a semester break in my junior year at Marshall University. I had ridden the spindly Ohio River branch several times. But now, after weeks of plotting with my *Official Guide*, I was ready for my “Circle Trip”—a peregrination that would cover all B&O territory I hadn’t traveled that was still open to passengers.

I had already ridden between Kenova and Huntington with yard crews; Huntington and Parkersburg on “the local;” the Ravenswood-Spencer, West Virginia,

branch; Pittsburgh and Parkersburg on an RDC special; the main line between Cincinnati and Baltimore; over the old Wheeling Division’s East End, and the Monongah Division’s Short Line between Parkersburg and Clarksburg during the 1963 summer when tunnels on “The Branch” were being enlarged or eliminated; Dundon to Charleston, West Virginia, with a special train that had just visited the Buffalo Creek & Gauley Railroad; Cincinnati and Lima, Ohio; and St. George and Tottenville, New York, on B&O’s Staten Island Rapid Transit.

My five-day Circle Trip itinerary would include another trip up the 118-mile branch to Parkersburg. By then the pair of overnight trains—which had been renumbered to 103 and 104—had inherited from the varnish and combines the task of conveying the public in cabooses, because of the highly ignored and insulted West



The crew aboard Baldwin switcher 9226 is going out to remove a carload of storage mail that originated in Cincinnati from the rear of Train 12, the *Metropolitan*, before the train departs Parkersburg's Sixth Street Station on Sunday, January 23, 1966.

Virginia Public Service Commission. I referred to those cabooses as “one-section, open-vestibule, dining-lounge, walkover-seat vista-bay cars.”

Then the trip would continue eastward over the mountains to Cumberland, Maryland; westward to Willard, Ohio, and Chicago—with side trips to Toledo and Lima, down to St. Louis and home via Cincinnati.

Chilly Start

The morning of January 22, 1966, greeted Huntington with a surprise snowfall, so I spent an unscheduled hour at a local bargain store getting winterized with a new pair of boots. Shortly after 2pm, my mother drove me to the C&O yard downtown. As a result of the C&O/B&O affiliation, B&O trains had been arriving in and departing from the C&O yard since July 1, 1965.



Flagman Charlie Morrow climbs on coach 3565 as Train 12, the “primarily mail” *Metropolitan*, leaves Parkersburg on Sunday, January 23, 1966.

We paused at DK Cabin so I could ask operator Vernon Shultz to notify the Ohio River dispatcher that tonight’s Train 104 would have a passenger. Then it was off to the 16th Street yard office, where I slid into the crew room to await the arrival of 104’s conductor.

C&O yard personnel, having inherited the B&O operation a scant six months before, didn’t know quite how to act when an occasional passenger showed up. The rider was more or less on his own to find a crew member and/or the caboose—hopefully before departure, which was never on time. Eventually, C&O/B&O smoothed things out, and before the service ended when Amtrak took over on May 1, 1971, riders were carried to the caboose in a company van.

Such amenities hadn’t been devised that blustery day when conductor W.H. Merville showed up. A crusty, no-nonsense veteran railroader two years away from retirement, Merville had nevertheless befriended this nosy and talkative kid some eight years before, when he and his mother rode a combine on their way to Baltimore. “Have you built a bonfire for all of Bobby’s train orders?” he asked her that day (The answer was “no.” I still got ‘em).

The train was on Lower No. 2 track, and caboose C2507 ironically was opposite the passenger station, seven blocks below the yard office. A sympathetic yard crew allowed us to board C&O Class S4



Postal clerks load mail onto RPO 93 (a B&O car in C&O colors) aboard the *Metropolitan* in Clarksburg at 2:50pm Sunday, January 23, 1966.

Alco 5107 as it ambled down Lower No. 1 track. Merville bailed off at the head of his 35-car train to check for sticking brakes, and I went ahead with our grips to unlock the caboose and sweep the snow off its platforms. When Merville climbed on, I plunked my \$5.30 cash fare into his hand. It would be up to him to buy my ticket at Parkersburg's Sixth Street Station after he was off duty.

Eventually, GP9s 6501 and 6566 coupled on, the air pumped up and tested. At 5:09, we jerked forward. As we weaved through the yard under the able hand of engineer William F. Thomas, dispatcher Jack Shields asked Merville by radio if he had a passenger. Merville replied in the affirmative, and wondered aloud, "How in the h - - did he know that?" I told him I had stopped at DK. Sure enough, our orders included a form 19 train order and two messages concerning the "pay passenger."

At 5:32pm, an hour and seven minutes late, we crawled out onto B&O's Monongah

Division at Guyandotte. Soon we were up to the bone-shattering speed of 30 miles an hour on 100-lb jointed rail. It did my young heart good to see that we were traveling faster than the automobiles on the slick adjacent State Route 2.

At Cox Landing, six miles out, the returning Point Pleasant District run was in the hole for us with C&O Class S4 Alco 5113, three cars, and caboose C2257. The crew radioed that they left four cars at "the Point" for us.

Interspersed throughout the evening were tales of the "good old days" of railroading and instructions on everything from hand signals to wages. Merville was one to reminisce. With no flagman, he spent seven nights a week alone in his weather-stripped rolling workplace. When he had company, he liked to talk.

Several times, the radio would crackle to life, spoiling our reverie. "All black on the river side!" or "All black on the hill side!" Merville would cast his eye toward

the journal boxes rumbling in front of him and mumble the same.

In a 20-minute stop at Point Pleasant, 39 miles along, we pulled those four cars out of New York Central transfer track No. 2 and received more orders "on the fly" as Thomas wheeled our 39-car train past the station and under NYC's Ohio River bridge. Departure was at 7:16, an hour and 22 minutes late. At New Haven, we dropped off a waybill for a car we would set off at Graham. The setoff was accomplished in 11 minutes, and our 38-car train was on its way again at 8:05.

Our caboose clattered to a stop at RS&G Junction, where snow-capped rails revealed inactivity on the Spencer branch. Our locomotive was at the Ravenswood station, where Thomas went inside to copy a train order. The operator hadn't been reached; no doubt he was snowbound someplace. Once we were under way at 9:20, an hour and two minutes late, Bill Thomas radioed the all-important train order to Bill Merville. It



Flagman Charlie Morrow returns to the warmth of coach 3565 as Train 12, the *Metropolitan*, prepares to leave Berkeley Run Junction, near Grafton, West Virginia, after counterpart Train 11 gets by. It is Sunday, January 23, 1966, and the snow is getting deeper.

said the order advising us that Ravenswood would be open for orders was annulled!

As we rumbled past the Ravenswood station, I spied Baldwin Class DS-4-4-1000 switchers 9240 and 9236, used on the RS&G branch and in daylight work at the nearby Kaiser Aluminum plant, peacefully snoring with their cabooses on the house track. The remainder of the evening was routine—we gazed with heavy eyelids at the embers in the stove and listened to the hypnotic banging of rail joints muffled by the ever-deepening snow.

Eventually, Train 104 rolled across the trestle spanning the Little Kanawha River's swelling tide, we beheld the elevated girders where Ann Street Station once stood and began its descent into Parkersburg's north-south Low Yard. Falling under the shadow of the High Yard's east-west mainline bridge across the Ohio River, the rear end neared SX Tower at 10:52pm, an hour and nine minutes late.

Really not bad in comparison to other trips, I thought, as Merville tried in vain to

reach Thomas by radio to let me off. Finally, he turned the air on him, and I had to walk back about 15 feet in the snow—now 11 inches of it—to reach warmth. I spent the night with a cousin—whose name was Howard Johnson—the same man whose family I would live with during my next three summers as a brakeman (When I told my friends where I had stayed, they thought that I spent those summers in a fancy hotel!). Boy, on that frigid January night, I was more thankful than usual for Appalachian hospitality and warm bed covers.

Climb Every Mountain

After almost eight hours of sleep (the last straight eight I would have for several days), I got up on Sunday, January 23, 1966, and enjoyed a succulent breakfast of scrambled eggs and bacon cooked by Howard's wife Katie. We went to Sunday School at the church across 23rd Street from the Johnson home—where Howard

had gotten his car hung up in the entrance to the parking lot the night before. We had to leave the worship service at 11:15am to eat a bountiful Sunday dinner (how about that for priorities?) and catch eastbound Train 12, the *Metropolitan*. Howard's car was still stuck, of course (there was now 15 inches of snow), but he asked a Marine who was headed for Saigon in a month to drive me to Sixth Street Station. I arrived two minutes before the train did—just in time to buy my \$8.80 ticket to Cumberland. Hooray—no line at the window!

Train 12, B&O's "primarily mail train," pulled by E8Am (rebuilt EA) 1437 and E6A 1411, came in with nine cars—three loads of express, an RPO, a Santa Fe mail/express/baggage car, coach/lounge 3547 (complete with a sandwich man from whom I bought a 25-cent Coke), ex-*Cincinnatian* coach 3565, the Cincinnati-Clarksburg storage mail car, and the Cincinnati-Parkersburg storage mail car. Shortly, after Baldwin DS-4-4-1000 yard engine 9226 removed the Parkersburg car, we were on our way.