

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Before his death not long ago, my father-in-law recounted a memorable train trip he had taken out West with his mother in 1929, starting from New York on the great *Twentieth Century Limited*. Almost 80 years later it was one of the experiences of his early life he felt was the most formative and exciting. With not enough detail to inform a train buff, but more than enough to write a travel story, he relished both that voyage and the recounting of it.

I have my own memory, albeit not so glamorous, of two long train journeys from Washington to Miami on the varnish of almost a half-century ago, one in an upper berth and another in a roomette. I can still feel in three dimensions how it was to climb into that upper berth and be rocked to sleep by the train's rhythm, and the half-awake feel and sound of the car being switched in some yard in the very late hours of the night.

And so it was with delight on a geographically short but incredibly long in time train voyage from Minsk, Belarus, to Vilna, Lithuania in a sleeper car, my children had one of the best travel experiences ever. The idea of sleeping on the train, of lying down and peering through the window at the passing scenery, of climbing high and being able to touch the car's ceiling totally enchanted them. They begged me to get them on another such train soon and often.

Don't think people have that kind of reaction to a plane trip, do you?

So you can imagine why I bought the special issue of *Classic Trains* on the history of the Pullman cars and of the trains whose names once carried with them

so much magic. It is a very nice edition and I enjoyed reading it. But in all the words and pictures, including the article asking which was the greatest, there was a little three-letter combination not to be seen: B&O.

Why is that? True, New York was long in that golden period of railroad travel the center of arts and entertainment, so its trains would be featured in films and story. The AT&SF as well as the Southern Pacific had Hollywood. But—with apologies to Pittsburgh, St. Louis, and Chicago—Washington had a certain claim to fame also. And OK, what's wrong with Pittsburgh, St. Louis, and Chicago?

There's some great scenery on the way and many stories to be told. And arguably on a B&O name train you ate better.

Then, too, if you were going from New York to Washington, that was sort of an epic journey between power centers. The people who were leading the rebuilding of America in the Great Depression (I don't think the current one has yet taken away that designation for the 1930s' event) and the fighting of World War II were going back and forth on those trains, for example.

So we're trying to rescue the tradition of the B&O's name trains and put them up there with the publicity-grabbing competition.

True, we're including Tom Greco's account of a *Capitol Limited* wreck, but that just goes to show how honest B&O fans are. Stories about wrecks are probably banned from other historical groups' publications. (Only kidding.)

—Barry Rubin

The Sentinel

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ON THE COVERS

Front Cover: The Strata Dome of the Capitol Limited included a speedometer, altimeter and clock to increase riders' pleasure, all part of the B&O's effort to make the Cap a showcase train. Ross Pollock's history of the train begins on page 3.
(Ed Griffith photograph, B&ORRHS collection)

Back Cover: EM-1 Number 7615 works near Sand Patch, Pennsylvania, in July 1954. Details varied among the locomotives. Page 25. (Bob's Photo, Greg Smith collection)

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With Number 5510, the B&O's one class T-1 Mountain, in charge, the Capitol Limited gets out of Washington, D.C., rolling past University on the northwest side of town at 4:12 p.m. Business appears to be good on this June 25 in 1932; photographer Bruce Fales counted 13 cars in the consist, and this is only the first section of the B&O's star Chicago train. (B&ORRH collection)

The Capitol Limited

B&O President Daniel Willard's Showcase Train

EDITOR'S NOTE: This article first appeared in the July, August and September 1975 issues of *B&O Railroader*, published by Neil Wood.

By Ross Pollock

The *Capitol Limited*, as daughter of one of the lesser trunk lines in the East, faced life from a horrendously disadvantaged competitive position. Yet through the years, her reputation for comfort and gracious service attracted a steady clientele of the cream of the business, society, and political worlds. A ride on the *Cap* was always, as *Trains* Editor David P. Morgan put it, “a distinctive way to spend the night”.

At the end of World War I, the country entered a period of unprecedented prosperity. Mainline passenger traffic was increasing, and competition for the public's patronage was fierce. The B&O, PRR and NYC, released from USRA operation, resumed their all-out war for the East Coast to Chicago and St. Louis gateways freight and passenger business.

Pennsy and the Central were each carding all-Pullman, luxury trains between New York and Chicago. Both the *20th Century Limited* (NYC 25 and 26) and the *Broadway Limited* (PRR 28 and 29) were well established, and both had the reputation to draw off potential B&O customers. To meet this competition, as well as to bolster sagging employee morale, generate favorable publicity, and of course to make money, B&O's President Daniel Willard needed a showcase train of his own.

“Uncle Dan” was probably the most passenger-minded railroad executive of his era. He was severely handicapped, however, by his road's ancient mainline with its many steep grades and tight curves. There were few stretches where sustained running was possible. Even

the fast ride over the relatively new and level Washington-New York line could be a rough one because of the numerous curves. The B&O's lack of a downtown terminal in New York occasioned a major inconvenience to passengers, requiring a bus and ferry ride across the Hudson to the Jersey Meadows (though as a result of a World War I agreement, through *Capitol Limited* sleepers operated into Pennsylvania Station, New York, from 1923 until 1926).

Unable to compete in time, and lacking the money for outright opulence, President Willard based his bid for the public's patronage on courteous, personalized service, attractive accommodations, on-time performance and fine food. His formula proved so successful that within a short time of the *Cap's*

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SAMPLE PAGE



The Wreck of the Capitol Limited

November 15, 1924

By Tom Greco

Alphaeus J. Ross hired out on the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad as a locomotive fireman in 1899. The young man advanced steadily in his chosen profession, such that November 15, 1924 found the 45-year-old Ross at the throttle of Train 5, the *Capitol Limited*, for the 152-mile run from Washington, D.C., to Cumberland, Maryland.

Seemingly a young man to be handling one of the B&O's most prestigious assignments, Ross had been associated with the train from its inception, having been the Cap's very first engineer between Baltimore and Washington on May 13, 1923. Indeed, the Baltimore resident "was considered to be one of the best enginemen on the division".

On this chilly and cloudy Saturday, Engineer Ross and his fireman, H.A. Griffin, reported for duty in Washington at around 2.15 p.m. Leaving Union Station on time at 3 o'clock, No. 5 consisted of 11 heavy steel cars: a 60-foot Railway Post Office car (Washington & Pittsburgh R.P.O. Train 5), a Pullman baggage-club car, two Pullman sleepers, two B&O dining cars, four more sleepers and a 10-section observation car.

(B&O documents of the period tell us that if 95 passengers had reserved space aboard Number 5 by 10 a.m., the extra diner would be added to the train's normal 10-car consist.)

Only five years old, Engine 5218 represented the best in B&O passenger power. The USRA 4-6-2, class P-5, carried the *Capitol Limited's* lighted drumhead on its smokebox that day, and sported a fancy steel-sheathed pilot.

Weverton, Maryland, 52.5 miles west of Washington and 3 miles west of the then-busy receiving and classification yards at Brunswick, Maryland, marked the end of the Baltimore Division and the start of the Cumberland Division. It was the yard limit for Brunswick.

For eastbound trains, Weverton was

the point at which Track 4, the slow-speed main track into Brunswick yard, diverged from high-speed main track Number 2. Westbound, Track 3 from the yard merged into high-speed Track 1. Passenger trains avoided delay by skirting the north and south sides of the yard on Tracks 1 and 2 respectively, and a series of crossovers at Weverton allowed trains to move from one track to any of the others.

The operator at VO Tower, which was open continuously, controlled the movements of dozens of trains in the course of 24 hours.

With the scene thus set, we note that this story had actually begun at 11.22 a.m., when Extra 6117 West passed Weverton on Track 1. Behind the new S-1 class 2-10-2 trailed 125 empty cars and a cabooses. No doubt the empties were coal cars being returned to the mines for loading.

Ninety-nine miles west, in the B&O's ornate Queen City Station in Cumberland, H.E. Flook was working as first-trick dispatcher for the East End Subdivision. At 11.33 a.m., the crew of Extra 6117 West contacted Flook to report that the long train had broken in two, resulting in the derailment of and damage to several cars. The westbound main was thus blocked, leaving only Track 2 open for the passage of trains west of Weverton.

Another "Big Six", Engine 6141, was dispatched to the scene with the Brunswick wreck train, and the work of opening Track 1 began.

Crews hoped that the track could be cleared for Train 19 around 3.45 p.m., and for Number 5, which was due at 4.14 p.m., but as the afternoon wore on, it became clear that this would not be possible, and it was decided that both trains would be crossed over to the eastbound Track 2 at Weverton to run around the derailed freight.



Engine 5218, a P-5 built by Baldwin in July 1919, was much the worse for wear after rolling onto its left side at 48 mph and sliding the equivalent of three football fields. But it was rebuilt as a P-5a in December of 1928 and remained in service until October of 1956.

(B&ORRHS collection)

Number 19, a coach-parlor car speedster between Washington and Pittsburgh, was detoured without incident. Shortly thereafter Engine 6141 came east on Track 1 with some damaged cars being returned to Brunswick, and was held clear of the switches to await the passage of Number 5.

At 4.07 p.m., Operator Marquette in VO Tower copied Train Order Number 39, which gave Number 5 right over opposing trains on eastbound Track 2. Since Number 5's rights were not being restricted, the order was issued on a Form 19, which did not require that the train be stopped and the signatures of the conductor and engineer be obtained.

Marquette then lined the crossover switches that would move Number 5 from the westbound Track 1 to Track 2. Running four minutes late, Number 5 was OSd by Brunswick at 4.14 p.m.

Two terms adapted from the B&O's operating rulebook will help explain what happened as the *Capitol Limited*

(see WRECK, page 21)

SAMPLE PAGE



Locomotive 7602 at Cumberland Engine Terminal, July 8, 1948. Notice that the engine has the original globe marker lamps and the location of sandbox filler hatches. The check valve has been relocated from the side of the boiler to the top.

(J. R. Quinn photograph, Greg Smith collection)

EM-1's

B&O's Last Articulated Steam Engine

By Greg Smith

Recently much has been published about B&O's EM-1's in historical and modeling media. Most of the articles have some basic information but are lacking in some of the reasoning that led to the purchasing of these magnificent machines and some unique spotting features.

Early studies of the system had determined that rigid-wheelbase locomotives would be restricted on numerous sections of the railroad. An evaluation report of 1940 found that the S-1's and Mountains were restricted on many critical parts of the railroad. The B&O determined that because of its steep grades, sharp curves, and many weight-restricted bridges, articulated locomotives were the best solution.

With a need for additional power during World War II, and the first choice—diesel power—not available

because of copper restrictions, the B&O approached Baldwin Locomotive Works for a solution.

The B&O had not purchased a new locomotive since 1927 and its innovative shops were upgrading older locomotives during the Depression to keep the freight moving. Knowing they needed an articulated locomotive that could maintain speeds and have outstanding traction effort, the Baldwin team and the railroad mechanical department decided on the Yellowstone (2-8-8-4) wheel arrangement that was successful for the Northern Pacific, D.M.&I.R., and Southern Pacific cab-forwards.

The B&O still had clearance issues stemming from its construction as the first commercial railroad in the United States. This led to the smallest 2-8-8-4 ever built. The advantage of building at

this time was that the EM-1's and sister T-3's were the most modern steam locomotives on the system.

The EM-1's worked most of the system hauling merchandise freight and drag freight, especially coal. They were used on rare occasions on passenger trains. Crews thought highly of them as good steamers and smooth runners. With their massive tenders, which held 25 tons of coal and 22,000 gallons of water, EM-1's needed fewer stops for fuel and water on long trips.

Variations on the EM-1's

In their 14 years of service there were a few variations and modifications made on the EM-1's. When studying pictures of these engines for historical and modeling research it is critical to know when the picture was taken.