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Message from the President

Happy New Year!

I hope you and your family had a safe and joyful holiday. Now it is time to work on 2019 events.

First let us summarize the last quarter of 2018. The convention went very well, but the attendance was down. With the decline in railroad facilities, the focus of future conventions will be more on presentations and less on bus tours. We did some of this during the Dayton convention with Saturday morning's three outstanding presentations on B&O operations in western Ohio. In future conventions, we will need more presentations on B&O topics to educate our attendees.

In early November we hosted the Chesapeake Division, NMRA, for their annual business meeting. In the process, after a tour of the archives, we picked up a few new members.

The second Holiday Party at World Headquarters was nicely attended and the group of us had a great time. The Holiday Party is for members and their guests to celebrate the end of the year and enjoy each other's company. There was a slight decline

in membership for the fourth quarter. If you have a friend who has not renewed, find out why and let me know. It is also important to recruit younger people to keep the society alive.

IMPORTANT NOTICE! We have had in the last couple of mailings a fairly large number of envelopes that failed to be delivered by the post office due to expired forwarding addresses. It cost \$6.00 to retrieve an envelope from the post office if the forwarding address has expired. If someone has not received their mailings and has moved, most likely they have failed to notify us of their new address. To get past mailing(s), arrangement must be made with Craig Close, Company Store Manager, and compensation will need to be paid to the society for the additional expense. Our future plans are to have frequent updates on society events and sales, but we need everyone's e-mail address. Please send us your electronic contact information so we can quickly update you on the activities of the society.

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On the Covers

FRONT COVER: This is Bob Withers's first photograph as a B&O employee. Work Extra 6475, the DuPont District Run, is in the hole for the *Kaiser District Run*—Extra 6498 East, referred to by employees as *The Kaiser Jet*—which hurries hot cars from the Kaiser Aluminum plant near Ravenswood to Parkersburg to make connections with eastbound freights on the St. Louis-Baltimore main line. It's 4:30pm on Friday, July 1, 1966, and the DuPont job is on the Marbon storage track at Marbon Chemical Company, in Washington, six miles below Parkersburg. Bob says, "I am its head brakeman. I'm doing what I love, and getting paid for it!"

BACK COVER: It is now 10:55am on Monday, July 25, 1966, and Work Extra 6405 has taken siding at Polk, 4.1 miles east of Sherman, to let the westbound *Kaiser Jet*, headed by GP9 6460, proceed toward the Kaiser Aluminum plant. Joe Krupinski is standing behind the cab of the 6405 to watch him by, as his brakeman [Bob Withers] aims his trusty Kodak.



Locomotive 1402 with Virginia Military Institute Cadets, 1918. (*The Bomb* [V.M.I. yearbook], 1918, p. 282)

The Shenandoah Special

A Named Train for the Valley Branch

by Wesley B. O'Dell, Ph.D.

The Shenandoah Special was a short-lived oddity that may be considered the high-water mark of Valley railroading: a crack passenger train fitted with ex-*Royal-Blue* equipment operating unbroken between Lexington, Washington, and Baltimore.

BACKGROUND

The Special was born out of the two elements in greatest supply along the Valley Branch: customer and investor dissatisfaction. The Garrett-era dream of a connection to the South via Salem, Virginia had been dashed when a Pennsylvania-Railroad-backed competitor won the race to present-day Roanoke. Defeated, the B&O abandoned its plans and was left with an extremely long branch line extending from Harpers Ferry to Lexington lacking a clear purpose.

This branch was as much assembled as it was constructed, and for the whole of its life was divided into three parts (Bob Cohen's book, referenced below, gives a full history). The first was the segment to Winchester and Strasburg via legacy short lines tightly controlled by the B&O. Between Strasburg and Harrisonburg, however, the situation was far messier. Here, B&O obtained a long-term lease on the pertinent section by acquiring control of the Virginia Midland. Finally, the segment between Harrisonburg and Lexington via Staunton was the province of the Valley Railroad, an enterprise funded by the B&O, the city of Baltimore, and (crucially) Rockbridge County, Virginia. Originally aimed at Salem, the Valley Railroad suffered financial hardship the whole of its life and was barely able to limp into

Lexington at the insistence of angry investors and Richmond politicians. There, it terminated at a union station with the C&O (née Richmond & Alleghany) branch from Balcony Falls on the James River.

Robert E. Lee, an early president of the Valley Railroad, then serving as president of Washington College in Lexington, perhaps summed up the chances of this unlikely line best in a letter lamenting his leadership of yet another "forlorn hope." The initial period of operation from the Lexington terminus featured standard passenger and freight services of the day, including through service to points north and Pullman accommodation, but underperformed the high expectations that once attached to it in the days when coal hauling was the objective. For example, Lexington only surpassed the mark of 900

outbound carload shipments per year—a figure including C&O traffic—in 1911; that number was as low as 620 as late as 1908. Lime and livestock were the most common commodities, with livestock particularly bound for Baltimore over the B&O.

The February 1896 descent of the B&O into receivership severely disrupted operations. The judicial adjudication of its myriad financial woes required the B&O to surrender its lease between Strasburg and Harrisonburg because, according to newspaper accounts, “the road was considered to be a burden to the property owing to the heavy rental charged and its small earning capacity.” Thus, in December of that year, the middle section of the Valley Branch fell into the hands of its ultimate owner, by then the Southern Railway, which wasted no time in terminating all B&O rights over its tracks. Passengers would now be forced to change trains between systems at both Strasburg and Harrisonburg, making what was formerly a convenient, single-seat journey into an exercise in stress and uncertainty. The Valley Branch had been effectively cleft in two.

This awkward arrangement gave control over the vital middle section of the route to a direct competitor for the Washington passenger market while, at the same time, leaving the B&O stuck with the least profitable section of the line, the Valley Railroad south of Harrisonburg. This obviously provided a powerful disincentive for the B&O to improve service on this route since all long-distance traffic would ultimately have to go over its competitors’ lines to escape rural western Virginia. As a result, communities along the line were hit with a double-blow: first, the practical problem of disrupted train service into and out of the Valley; second, a state of underinvestment and neglect that naturally resulted from the absurd position the B&O found itself in vis-à-vis its isolated branch.

OVER A DECADE OF DISCONTENT

For the B&O’s Valley Branch and the communities it served, the next 18 years were a mixture of anger, disappointment, and sporadic hope for the restoration of reasonable through service. Though numerous changes in schedule and carriage would afflict the branch for decades, no workable arrangement presented itself.



Locomotive 1402 with Virginia Military Institute Cadets, 1918
(VMI Archives Photographs Collection, 1918, 0002852)

Sporadic and very limited examples of cooperation between the B&O and Southern—occasional through coaches were run over the latter, but never lasted long—belie a wider narrative of competition that characterized their relations in this period.

Beyond simply blocking the B&O’s desire to reacquire a continuous line either through purchase or trackage rights, the Southern actually took the offensive. In 1902, newspapers reported rumors of Southern collusion with disillusioned Valley Railroad investors with an aim toward seizing control of the route to Lexington, while later in the decade it solicited the assistance of the Virginia State Corporation Commission (SCC)—a frequent player in this drama—in attempting to force the B&O to operate a Lexington to Alexandria, Virginia (Washington, D.C.) through train. When the B&O refused, the SCC responded with a \$500 fine. In response, the B&O pled its case: running a Lexington-Alexandria train, it claimed, “was practically giving the Southern Railway all the through passenger traffic from the Valley section.” Its suggested compromise, the Southern permitting two through trains daily to Harpers Ferry in exchange for two through trains daily to Alexandria, was rejected by the SCC.

The communities along the route were understandably frustrated with the inability of the corporations and government to come to a solution, and disappointment was widely expressed in town councils, newspapers, and chambers of commerce.

As one Lexington resident put it in 1910, the Valley service was “a joke” to the B&O: overpriced, always late, lacking connections, and a dumping ground for “refuse rolling stock” with engines powered by “refuse coal.” Government action was called for. Baltimore City, a major investor in the Valley Railroad, became something of a spokesman for these communities agitating for action, and *The Baltimore Sun’s* reports on railroad politicking and editorials calling for better passenger service were reprinted up and down the Valley. A news item of May 16, 1902 reported a measure moving through the Baltimore City Council to investigate the Valley Railroad’s underperformance. Said one weary council member in response to the resolution:

I can tell you why...it is unproductive. The road runs from Harrisonburg to Staunton and Lexington. The Baltimore and Ohio runs to Strasburg. There is no connection between Strasburg and Harrisonburg, and the Valley road is earning less than its fixed charges. I object to the resolution because anybody can get the information in Poor’s Manual in any broker’s office.

Profit was not the only concern shared by citizens of Baltimore and Lexington; convenience and quality of life were also important topics. A 1909 *Baltimore Sun* editorial reprinted in the *Lexington Gazette* placed primary blame for the situation on the Virginia SCC, taking it to task for what it



Engine 1400 at Baltimore, 1925 (Author's collection)

labeled its disposition "to favor the Southern road and discriminate against the lower Valley, Baltimore and the [B&O]." This was a fair accusation given the maneuvering by prominent Virginians against the road in its early years (Lee's support notwithstanding); however, the editorial also made clear that the B&O's schedule and amenities on the route made a bad situation worse:

A representative of the [B&O], in answer to the complaints of the people of the Valley of Virginia, declares that the passenger service between Lexington and Baltimore is as good as it was 10 years ago...[but if] we make a study of the time-tables of the route to the Valley of Virginia we might believe that if the company had announced that the present service is as bad as it was 10 years ago it would have been a more accurate form of expression. The distance from Baltimore to Lexington is 243 miles. The passenger leaves Baltimore at 8 o'clock A.M. and in 4 hours and 38 minutes reaches Strasburg Junction, having already changed cars at Harper's Ferry. He then changes to the Southern road and at 2:55 P.M. gets to Harrisonburg. In Harrisonburg he changes back to the Baltimore and Ohio and journeys on to Lexington, reaching there at 6 P.M., having been 10 hours on the trip, all day long, in fact, without a parlor car and stopping at every station. If he misses the 8 A.M. train he must wait until the next day.

The lack of through service, the absence of parlor cars, and insufficient train frequencies all united urban Baltimore with rural Virginia in grievance against the B&O.

The

"Shenandoah Special"

NEW THROUGH TRAINS

Between

Baltimore, Washington, Harper's Ferry, Charles Town, Winchester, Stras- burg Junction, Harrisonburg, Staunton and Lexington

Without Change of Cars

MODERN COACHES--PARLOR DINING CARS

SCHEDULE EFFECTIVE JUNE 1, 1914.

9:15 A. M. Lv. Baltimore (Camden Station)	Ar. 3:35 P. M.
10:10 A. M. Lv. Washington	Ar. 2:35 P. M.
11:42 A. M. Lv. Harper's Ferry	Ar. 1:00 P. M.
12:01 P. M. Lv. Charles Town	Ar. 12:30 P. M.
12:47 P. M. Ar. Winchester	Lv. 11:58 A. M.
1:30 P. M. Ar. Strasburg Junction	Lv. 11:18 A. M.
3:30 P. M. Ar. Harrisonburg	Lv. 9:35 A. M.
4:35 P. M. Ar. Staunton	Lv. 8:30 A. M.
6:20 P. M. Ar. Lexington	Lv. 6:50 A. M.

For complete Schedules showing changes in other trains, Tickets,
Reservations of Parlor Car Space and Full Infor-
mation, call at Ticket Offices.

BALTIMORE & OHIO

Advertisement for "Shenandoah Special," *Frederick News* [Maryland], June 4, 1914

Widespread disappointment in the line's performance boiled over into outright anger on many occasions. As early as 1901, Rockbridge County was showing signs of having given up on the B&O. In February of that year, the county board of supervisors formally accused the B&O of running the Valley Railroad "in the interest of the Baltimore and Ohio road and not in the interest of the counties through which the Valley road passes and who largely contributed to its building" and petitioned the state legislature to remove the tax exemption that line had been granted. Years later, in October 1913, the City of Baltimore's anger had risen to such levels that it employed public accountants to audit the Valley Railroad's accounts "to learn whether the Baltimore and Ohio has allowed the Valley all it should." Pressure for improvements could even involve state-level officials, as when a delegation of Valley officials visited Richmond in February 1905 for a conference with the Attorney General and the president of the C&O. Their objective was to secure better scheduling for trains travelling from Richmond on the C&O to Lynchburg and Lexington and thence up the B&O and Harrisonburg; they successfully secured the C&O's promise to put pressure on the B&O to that effect.

These and other attempts at reform emanating from Baltimore and the Valley intensified and grew angrier the longer the situation persisted. By 1910, the drastic measure had been proposed in the Baltimore and Lexington papers to transfer the Valley line to another railroad. The Southern was the obvious candidate, for, as *The Baltimore Sun* put it, "The Southern road being in the Valley, and from all indications, meaning to stay, the property of the Valley Railroad cannot fail to be of value to it." But the C&O was another potential operator, "if for no other reason than for the purpose of preventing the Southern from getting into Staunton." Rumors of the latter possibility resurfaced in the summer of 1913, with the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* noting that "[Lynchburgers] believe that they would get the lion's share of everything except the millinery trade. Lynchburg concedes the millinery to Baltimore."

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Table 4—LANE BRANCH—Philadelphia Division.															Table 5—SOUTH BRANCH.														
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November 29, 1914.															December 13, 1914.														
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Table 6—BALTIMORE, FREDERICK AND WASHINGTON JUNCTION, VIA OLD MAIN LINE.																													
January 3, 1915.															Eastern time.														
Table 7—BALTIMORE, WASHINGTON JUNCTION AND HAGERSTOWN.																													
January 3, 1915.															Eastern time.														
Table 8—CURTIS BAY BRANCH.																													
November 29, 1914.															Eastern time.														
Table 9—BERKELEY SPRINGS AND POTOMAC BRANCH.																													
December 13, 1914.															Eastern time.														
Table 10—SHERANDOAH DIVISION.																													
January 3, 1915.															Eastern time.														

THE SAFETY CAR HEATING & LIGHTING CO.

SAFETY CAR LIGHTING FIXTURES

Shenandoah Division timetable from Official Guide, 1915
(Weber State University, Stewart Library Special Collections)

THE SHENANDOAH SPECIAL

By late 1911, the persistent complaints about the route began to attract the attention of B&O's new president, Daniel Willard. In response to the latest accusation from Valley customers that "citizens of every city and town along the route are unpleasantly familiar with the poor service, especially the passenger service" provided by the B&O, he promised to discuss with the Southern the addition of more passenger trains.

The results of this conference—or even if it happened—are unknown, but what is certain is that Willard inaugurated a program of major investment in the Valley shortly thereafter. The most significant of these infrastructure improvements was the rebuilding of the line from Lexington to Harrisonburg; this replaced 54- and 64-pound rails and neglected roadbed with 85-pound rail at a cost of at least \$4,000. It also provided new ties, and a quantity