 LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

In this issue of The Sentinel you’ll find articles by three authors who are basically new to our pages.

Janet Van Doren, a retired chemist, leads off the parade with her pieces beginning on page 3 about the B&O’s stone viaducts in Medina County, Ohio, and a pictorial essay on how they were built—basically without poured concrete. Given the number of these that the B&O had, at least two of which remain in daily use in Maryland, they’re an important part of the railroad’s history and deserve attention.

Dave Ori will be recognized by members as a collaborator on at least three books about the B&O basically west of Pittsburgh, with more coming. Here, he teams with onetime yardmaster Don Riel to examine the comings and goings of a ground employee’s day.

Lastly we welcome the work of Keith Rader, who held positions in various yards of the B&O system before decamping for the Association of American Railroads. Keith spins tales of B&O men and events at a prodigious pace, and first came to fans’ notice with his stories for News & Notes, the publication of the Retired Administrators of the B&O Club. In Keith, we have a worthy successor to our longtime friend Ric Nelson.

RABO N&N has a new editor, Frank Dewey, who was a presenter at the Society’s national convention in Baltimore in the fall of 2010. He succeeds Ray Lichty, who had to make time for a book project.

Frank is delighted to continue the mutual back-scratching The Sentinel enjoyed with Ray, and in an issue early next year we’re going to offer his piece about dynamometer cars, which should prove enlightening.

We had a suggestion that we should do a piece on B&O designer Olive Dennis. Sharon Harwood’s presentation at the Somerset, Pennsylvania, convention in the fall of 2012 will be transcribed soon.

And why am I sitting here gassing in this vein, wasting space that could be used for a (very elongated) train picture? Simple—MORE!

There are areas of the railroad that we’ve gotten away from or never touched. It’s time to look again at the extensive B&O operations in West Virginia. Detailed looks at the B&O’s yards around Pittsburgh are due more examination (at least one member has asked for a piece about the Wheeling-Pittsburgh line; I’m trying to find a writer).

How about the B&O in north-central Indiana, the lines out of Indianapolis? That’s an area not well explored. A detailed look at how the B&O interlocked operations among its yards in Baltimore?

It’s time to increase the participation level going forward. And presenting the results of your research isn’t that hard; you just sit and stare at the computer till little beads of blood pop out on your forehead (Yeah, one of my favorite lines). Maybe this line from a new book will be more soothing—“Just grammar and occasionally infuriating editorial nit-picking and good graphic display. backed by the pleasure of seeing your name in print and the occasional beer at conventions.

Give it a try.—HMeem

IN THIS ISSUE

THE BRIDGES OF MEDINA COUNTY B&O Eases a Track Profile, by Janet Van Doren 3

NIGHT WATCH AT NEW CASTLE JUNCTION An Assistant Trainmaster’s Life at an Important B&O Terminal, by Don Riel with Dave Ori 14

ABOUT THE CSX CONTENT Responses to a Letter 28

A MYSTERY INVOLVING A PHONE CALL B&O Wreck in Cumberland Started 1941 Badly, by Keith Rader 29

RUNNING LIGHT, Repairs, Restorations, etc. 33

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ON THE COVERS

FRONT COVER: A pair of EMD road units awaits their next assignment at the fueling facility at New Castle Junction, Pennsylvania, on November 8, 1984. (Rick Acton Jr. photograph) [Page 14]

BACK COVER: The B&O’s viaduct at Lodi, Ohio, still carries big CSX trains daily. You and I should do so well at 100 (Lisa Van Doren photograph) [Page 3]
A B&O 2-10-2 has freight well in hand as it rolls east through Lodi, Ohio, from Willard toward Akron in late 1956 or early 1957. Most of the big locomotives had migrated west of the Ohio River by this time and handled a great deal of through freight, sharing the work with T-class 4-8-2s. (Herbert H. Harwood Jr. photograph)

The Bridges of Medina County

B&O Eases a Track Profile

By Janet Van Doren

At the start of the 20th century the engineers of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad faced a problem with the roadbed on the main line through Lodi, Ohio. Using the construction tools of the time, steam power and manual labor, they solved the problem by building an "ancient," yet modern, stone bridge.

A hundred years later, this magnificent bridge still carries the biggest diesel engines and trains across the Black River on their journey between Chicago and the East coast.

As early as 1884 citizens of Medina County were hearing about plans for a railroad route from Akron to Chicago. Just who would finance the road and where would it cross the county?

The Baltimore and Ohio Railroad became most likely to complete the route. By 1871 the B&O had reached Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, from the Baltimore area. By 1874 the B&O had completed a route to Chicago across central Ohio via Newark and Mansfield, then north to Chicago Junction (now Willard), Ohio. A new line of about 80 miles running west from Akron to Chicago Junction would give the B&O a much more direct route.

Several possible routes were speculated on for an east-west line through Medina County to connect Akron with the main B&O route that went west from Chicago Junction. The issue was decided when, in December 1890, a mortgage deed was recorded in Medina County by a new company, the Akron and Chicago Junction Railroad, in the amount of $1,500,000 to the Mercantile Trust Company of New York. On the same date, the Akron and Chicago Junction Railroad signed a lease for the line with the B&O for 999 years with automatic right of renewal.

The Akron and Chicago Junction...
The Baltimore & Ohio Railroad Through Lodi

1893

1907

Railroad was controlled by Henry William Oliver. Oliver had a long career in business and politics in Pittsburgh. His early experience as a clerk during the era of canal travel and later as a shipping clerk for Graff, Benner and Company made him well aware of the advantages of rail transportation, and after his business and political involvement he devoted his years from 1875 to 1892 to the need for more rail transportation through Pittsburgh.

Over several years, he and his group of investors obtained control of five regional railroads, including the Pittsburgh and Western, which gave him access to the city of Akron and Ohio lake ports by 1881. Connecting the new B&O route with the Pittsburgh and Western gave the Oliver group the route that opened Pittsburgh not only to Lake Erie, but to the entire western U.S.

In January 1891 track appeared in the small village of Lodi, Harrisville Township, in southwestern Medina County about 10 miles from the county seat of Medina. By August trains were running from the east and Lodi sported a new red and yellow depot.

The B&O had chosen to cross the Wheeling and Lake Erie Railroad at Lodi on a grade crossing and then sweep southwest over the Black River valley to Sullivan. This route avoided the problem of bridging the Black River, but created a significant grade about three miles southwest of Lodi. The 1.5 percent grade proved steep enough to require a pusher engine for most westbound traffic.

By September 1891 more problems with the route became apparent when a B&O passenger train, stopping in Lodi to take water, happened to extend back into the Wheeling and Lake Erie track. A W&LE train clipped the back of the B&O train, causing numerous injuries and one death. Other horrendous train wrecks would continue to happen on the crossing.

By choosing the relatively flat and low river valley west of Lodi, the B&O avoided the “Black Swamp.” This was an area of unstable ground that included muck soil, which grew great onion and celery crops, but literally ate locomotives. The local newspaper correspondent relates how, on numerous occasions, the citizens of Lodi would venture to the track to see how the large pile drivers would succeed in driving 36-foot piles into the roadbed or railroad workers would push carloads of gravel into a sinkhole to stabilize the railroad bed.

By 1901, the B&O Railroad had come under the control of the Pennsylvania Railroad. After a series of short-term presidents for the B&O, the Pennsylvania system decided to install its own man as president of the B&O—Leonor F. Loree, who served as president from June 1901 until January 1904.

Loree was an 1877 civil engineering graduate of Rutgers University who started as a rodman for the PRR and by 1901 had risen to be vice president in charge of the Pennsylvania system lines west of Pittsburgh. In 1907 he became president of the Delaware and Hudson Railroad.

Loree was president of the B&O for only 31 months. In that time he launched a 20-year improvement program that modernized the road and gave it a profitable future. He gave attention to improving grades and curves, replacing bridges and expanding to double track over the entire B&O route from Chicago to the East Coast.
One biographer describes Loree as being an Anglophile. Perhaps this explains his partiality to stone bridges. Certainly the ancient bridges of England and Europe had proven the stone bridge to be a structure of long life and low maintenance and the B&O had built a number of them in the late 1800s.

Loree's stone tunnels and bridges made it possible to maintain a maximum grade of 0.3 percent on the B&O lines in the Midwest. All of these improvements were focused on the need to handle the larger, heavier trains that he brought into service on the B&O.

The accident-prone, unstable roadbed, single track between Lodi and Sullivan, certainly met Loree's criteria for the reconstruction program. In September 1905 the first contractors seeking work were evident in Lodi.

The new line would pass through Lodi, cross above the Wheeling and Lake Erie track on a steel bridge and continue on a high embankment, up to 30 feet high, nearly to Sullivan, crossing the Black River on a new stone bridge. This slightly shorter route would avoid the "Black Swamp" and eliminate the substantial grade between Lodi and Sullivan. By October 1905 work was under way west of Lodi being done by Reinhart, Dennis and Company of Washington, D.C. Work to the east of Lodi was handled by Hoover and Kennear of Columbus, Ohio. The project would have a total cost of $2 million for 13 miles of double-track roadbed and employ about 1,000 laborers, noted by the newspaper to be mostly Italian, Romanian, and Austrian.

These men were housed in two work camps comprising tar paper sheds about 18x32 feet in dimension with no windows and only two stovetops extending above the roof. All food and materials for the camps were provided by the railroad. Local men were employed as teamsters and carpenters.

The great stone bridge over the Black River was designed by D.D. Carothers, chief engineer of the B&O. A.M. Kinsman was the B&O engineer in charge of construction and A.H. Griffith was the local engineer for the B&O. The bridge was built by Allen and Kefauver of Washington and Baltimore, with the local contractor being George Tresher. Locals came to call the project "Tresher's bridge".

Two different estimates of cost for the bridge alone appear in the local newspaper. One early estimate gives the cost at $250,000 and a later estimate states $500,000. In today's dollars this would amount to $10 million to $20 million. The great stone bridge also cost the lives of five workmen, and three murders occurred at the camps.

Crossing the Black River truly was a massive project in both scope and money. The Medina Gazette in a feature article describes the bridge as:

- Each span 100 feet
- Barrel of arches 33 feet
- 85 feet above the river
- 386 feet length
- Two pier foundations—30 feet deep and 35 by 65 feet
- Two larger, but less deep abutment piers.

The same article notes the material used:

- 293 cars Berea block stone
- 310 cars crushed stone
- 73 carloads cement
- 161 carloads of sand
- 68 cars miscellaneous material
- Total of 905 carloads of material
- 250,000 feet of lumber to center the three arches
- 50,000 feet of lumber for miscellaneous use.

Engineering and construction challenges were tremendous for the railroad contractors, but the local citizens also presented obstacles to the completion of the B&O road improvements. Very early in the project local citizens objected to high embankments and deep trenches appearing across the local wagon roads. The County Commissioners and Harrisville Township Trustees began negotiations with the B&O project engineers and it was agreed that the local population would not object to the B&O plans except that the citizens insisted that the B&O plan for the northeast-southwest West Salem Road include a separate bridge. The wagon road was not to be diverted to run west to the major bridge at the Black River and then turn south under the bridge as the railroad engineers had planned.

In January 1906 the Medina Probate Court held a hearing to determine just what rights the railroad had to divert and move roads and what rights were reserved for the local citizenry. By March the commissioners had obtained an injunction restraining the railroad from moving public highways. All seemed calm and no major decisions came forth as to how the new railroad would cross the West Salem road.
On another day in the twilight of steam in the winter of 1956-57, Herb Harwood was at the Black River bridge as a 2-10-2 rolled east with a string of empty hopper cars bound for Holloway and Bellaire, Ohio, and back to the mines in West Virginia. The triple arches were built using stones cut to fit so that no concrete was needed above the piers. Their own weight holds the stones in place. (See the photo essay beginning on page 9)

Road. Then on Friday, October 27, 1906 the contractor began to move materials to the location where the new railroad would cross the West Salem Road. What the railroad knew, but the citizenry didn't, was that the local court had quietly sustained an action by the railroad to grant a demurrer of the injunction.

At first light on the next Sunday morning, when the village was quiet, the railroad turned out a force of 100 men and machines and swooped down to immediately close the road and put up an embankment. By Sunday noon they had laid temporary track, ran five small cars out onto the new track, and quit for the day.

Harrisville Township citizens were incensed, but sought a new injunction on Monday. It was not granted. Indignation rose. The railroad had stolen the roadway. What could be done? On Tuesday, before daylight, word was passed along the new telephone system from the Harrisville Township Trustees to about 100 farmers to "be there" and bring their teams and scrapers. Road Supervisor Elgar Barnard ordered the railroad workers to clear the roadway and open the road to the public. The railroad responded by rushing three engines onto the track. A township official declared "move them or dynamite will be used" and dynamite was brought. Two engineers abandoned their engines.

The third engineer defied the citizens and stayed, only to be clutched by the throat by brawny arms and dragged from the engine.

A man in the crowd who knew how to handle a steam throttle jumped onto an abandoned engine and pulled all three engines off to the side. Then a dozen of the largest horse teams around were hooked to the rails. The tracks were twisted, broken and dragged to the side of the road. Dynamite and shotguns were ready in a tent next to the road just in case the railroad operators tried again. The farmers remained on guard until the sheriff arrived after the railroad managers insisted he clear the highway of the "mob."

Trustee "Dick" Albert, said by the
The bridge over West Salem Road, the subject of much contentiousness in the early 1900s, is built to the same standards as the one over the Black River. (Lisa Van Doren photograph)

The new B&O high line, in places running on an embankment up to 30 feet high, eliminated the need to cross the WLE at grade. (Lodi Historical Society collection)

newspaper editor to resemble and act like General Israel Putnam Albert of Revolutionary War fame, spoke for the farmers and informed the sheriff that they were acting within their legal rights and meant to stay there until the courts determined the rights of the citizens. The farmers wanted no trouble, but would not budge until the matter was adjudicated.

Eventually the sheriff quieted the dispute, talking with A.H. Kinsman, who spoke for the railroad. The railroad men then left with the sheriff, but the guardians of the road remained. By the following Wednesday another injunction
Besides the two massive stone bridges, the former B&O freight station remains in Lodi. Now painted cream with light blue trim, it is used by maintenance-of-way crews on a regular basis. (Janet Van Doren photograph)

was obtained to restrain the railroad and the farmers returned home, avoiding an ugly confrontation. At a lengthy hearing in December, the local Probate Court attempted to obtain a compromise and proposed a bridge on the railroad that would allow the West Salem Road to remain in place with only a slight jog so that it would cross under the railroad track at a right angle. By now the local citizens and their representatives were past a compromise stage. They demanded the road not be changed one bit and insisted on a long trestle that would take into account the sharp angle of the local road to the railroad.

The B&O objected, stating that such a bridge would be exceedingly costly and not as safe for travel as the right-angle approach. The next step was the Circuit Court of Appeals. On May 3, 1907, that court met in Medina and, after a short hearing, upheld the Probate Court proposal to bridge the road at a right angle. Plans for a three-arch stone bridge at the West Salem crossing, dated June 5, 1907, were signed by D.D. Carothers and A.M. Kinsman. Local citizens still talked about an appeal to the Supreme Court, but by December 1907 B&O trains were running over the new stone bridge over the slightly diverted West Salem Road.

To this day the second three-arch stone bridge transports speeding trains over the West Salem Road and welcomes people traveling east on old U.S. 224 into the Village of Lodi. The Black River bridge was finished by November 1907 and the entire project was completed in December 1907, less than 2½ years after the work began. By May 1908 passenger trains were regularly passing through to and from Chicago and the East Coast. Today massive CSX trains, much faster and heavier than those of 100 years ago, thunder across the bridges every day.

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