

The Railway  
Historical  
Southeast



& Locomotive  
Society, Inc.  
Chapter

Newsletter No. 49, October 1998

## A Western Maryland Train Trip



This is the territory of Art Towson's ride. As *The Western Maryland Railway/Fireballs & Black Diamonds*, by Roger Cook & Karl Zimmerman, Howell-North Books, states: *Here Trains 2 and 5 meet west of Westminster in 1947. K2's Nos. 201 and 206 — along with sisters 202 and 204 — have recently been converted to burn oil in compliance with a Baltimore anti-smoke ordinance. This quartet now [1981] protects all passenger service on the East End.* - Photo by F. E. Riffle, Herbert H. Harwood Jr. collection.

# A TRAIN TRIP ON THE WESTERN MARYLAND

by Art Towson

When I was a child, a favorite summer activity for me was visiting my paternal grandparents on their farm. It was located near Smithsburg, Maryland, and fortunately for me, on the Western Maryland mainline to Baltimore. At that time, during the early forties, my family was living near Baltimore. Therefore it made perfect sense to travel to Smithsburg over the Western Maryland from Hillen Station in Baltimore.

World War II brought gasoline rationing, and many railroad passenger lines became very busy; even the local Western Maryland trains had an increase in passenger traffic.

One very warm Sunday afternoon during the war years, after I had spent several days at the farm near Smithsburg, it was time to return to my parents in Baltimore. My grandfather was to accompany me on the train. My grandmother drove us to the station where we could catch an east-bound train to Baltimore.

The train was probably the #2, leaving at 2:30, and arriving in Baltimore at 5:05. To the best of my recollection we arrived at the 1895 limestone station in Smithsburg well before train time. The station, which is still standing, was built on an embankment. Wooden steps went down the bank to a brick platform.

The Western Maryland timetable had Smithsburg listed as an "F", or "flag stop". Shortly after we left the waiting room, the agent joined us, carrying a flag.

As the train pulled in chugging, and with a slight wisp of black smoke drifting behind, I heard

my grandmother say, "I hope that you will be able to get an air-conditioned car." As the light K-2 Pacific pulled along the platform, I wasn't able to count the number of cars in the consist, although it seemed to be longer than usual. Normally there would be a baggage car, a railway post office car, and two coaches. The train was probably longer because of the increased wartime traffic.

While we were still on the platform, I noticed that a man had pushed a mail cart from the post office and that he had it in position for the RPO car. There was a mail crane on the other side of the platform, but I don't ever recall it being used. No fast expresses through this town!

A few minutes later we boarded the train and I remember the excitement I felt as we began to move. The train chuffed up the 1.58% grade on the west side of South Mountain, part of the Blue Ridge chain of the Appalachians. We passed the many, well tended, apple and peach orchards which grace this part of Maryland. I also recall a spectacular view of the valley south of Waynesboro, Pennsylvania. We passed Edgemont, where the BC&V Line, now a branch, went into Waynesboro and then on to Quinsonia, PA. At Quinsonia it connected with the "cutoff" from Hagerstown to Shippensburg, PA. At Shippensburg, the WM connected with the Reading to Philadelphia and the northeast.

As I recall, the train was crowded with Sunday travelers. My grandfather and I weren't able to find seats together. The coach was somewhat stuffy. A little girl in the car complained that it was too hot. Apparently the hot weather was tax-

---

---

## **SOUTHEAST CHAPTER OFFICERS:**

<b>James A. Smith</b>	<b>Chairman</b>
<b>William F. Howes, Jr.</b>	<b>Vice-Chairman</b>
<b>Frank H. Dewey</b>	<b>Secretary</b>
<b>James H. Wilk</b>	<b>Treasurer</b>
<b>Clifford J. Vander Yacht</b>	<b>Editor</b>

**The Southeast Limited is  
published bi-monthly by the  
Southeast Chapter of the  
Railway & Locomotive Historical Society  
P. O. Box 664  
Jacksonville, FL 32201**



**WMRy Smithsburg, MD, passenger station at the turn of the century. Built in 1895 of limestone construction. Structure still exists without the steps and platform. At different times, it served as a bank branch, hair salon, insurance office and now as a telephone paging service. The framed station in the background, shown below in greater detail, was constructed under contract to the WMRr by J. T. Towson, the author's great grandfather, in 1872. The siding, note turnout in the foreground, was for many years carried in the WM employee's timetable as the Towson siding and coal trestle. It served the J. T. Towson & Son agribusiness. The siding was retired about 1975. Art Towson collection.**





**WMRy freight house built in early 1900s to replace original wooden station built by J. T. Towson, which burned. This building was demolished in the late 1980s to make room for the local Rescue Service. Art Towson collection.**

ing the ice block air cooling system. A vendor walked through the coach selling candy and reading materials. My grandfather bought a copy of LIFE magazine, and I got a pack of Lifesavers.

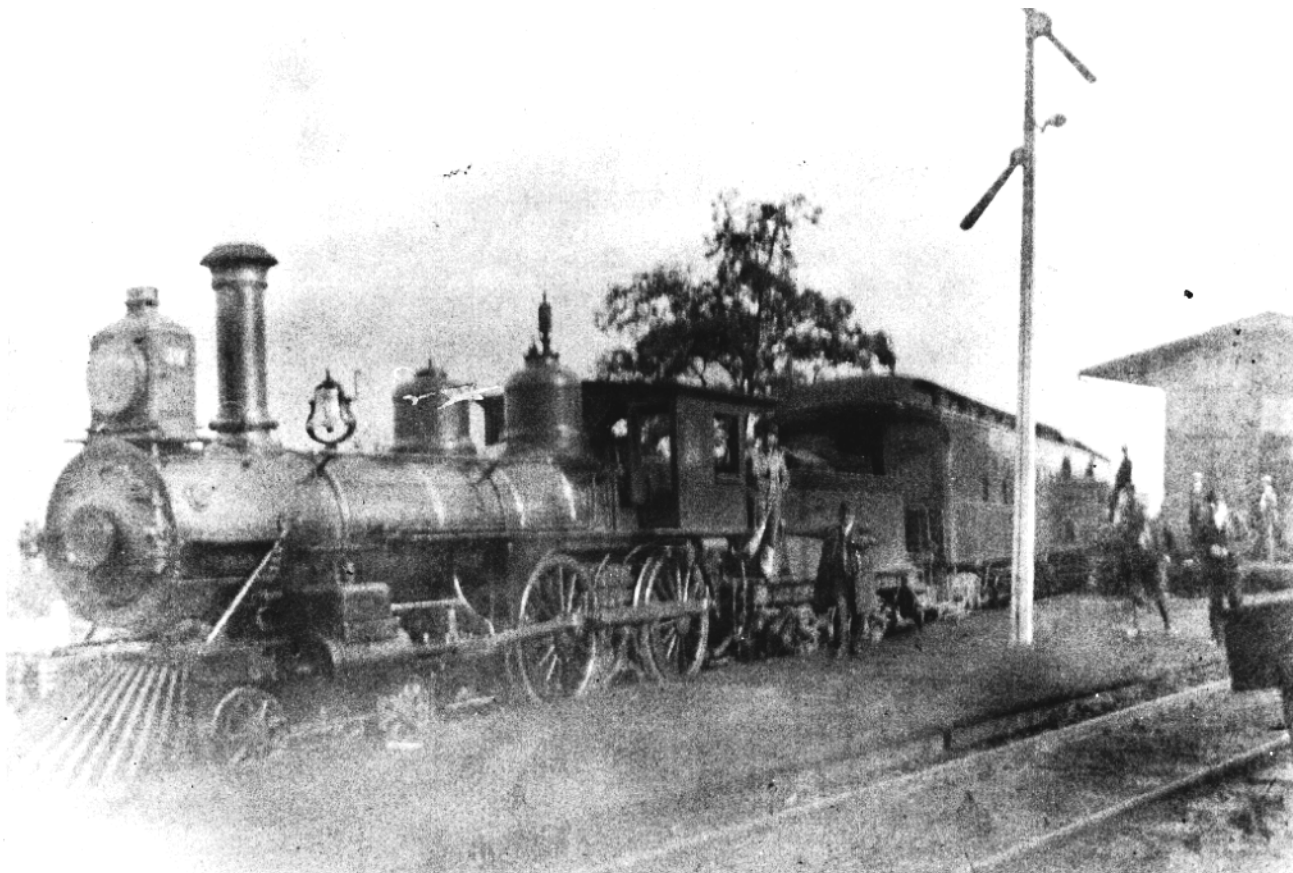
I remember hearing my grandfather remark, “looks as though we might have a freight engine on the front.” It is possible that a freight engine was at the front of the train because the WM did have a few of their “high wheeled,” high numbered, 700 consolidations equipped to protect passenger assignments and probably troop trains as well.

A short time later we arrived at Highfield, Maryland, the top of the mountain. In Highfield there was a train order office, an unused turntable, and a water tank. The water tank was double spouted to serve engines on the mainline as well as the line to Gettysburg and Hanover.

From Highfield we passed Blue Ridge Summit, Pennsylvania, then east around the horse shoe curve at Sabillasville. This curve is not as spectacular as the one on the Pennsy, but it still very scenic.

Along the way my grandfather told me the names of the various stations: Thurmont, where the Potomac Edison (H&F) trolleys met the WM passenger trains; Rocky Ridge, the former connection to the Emmittsburg RR; Union Bridge, with the Civil War era WM shop buildings, Lehigh Portland Cement, and where the WM commuter service out of Hillen Station, Baltimore, terminated. Just east of Union Bridge, we passed a wooden coaling tower and a water tank. I remember that a few stray lumps of coal vibrate loose from the chute and rattled on the car roofs.

The train rolled on through Carroll County,



**4-4-0 and passenger train on B&CV branch at Edgemont, MD. The WM Ry mainline from Hagerstown to Baltimore MD is in the foreground. Photo taken about 1885, courtesy of Jay Fogle, Smithsburg, MD. Art Towson collection.**

past neat farms, meandering streams, and pastures sprinkled with cows and horses. The conductor's signal cord sounded as we approached each station, and he announced each with crisp clarity. "Yoounyon Bridge!" "Neww Windsor!"

After leaving Westminster and going through west Baltimore, we left the WM at Fulton, traveled a mile or so under the PRR electrification, then made a station stop at Penn Station. East of Penn Station we returned to the WM trackage and continued into Hillen Station, a stub end terminal, just a short distance from downtown Baltimore. We arrived on time, and my parents were there to meet us. I had thoroughly enjoyed the train ride.

I rode the WM from Baltimore to Smithsburg and returned several times during the late 1940s. The last trip which I remember was during the summer of 1951. Except for an occasional work train and the passenger trains, the WM had dieselized all of their operations east of Hagerstown,

In spite of declining passenger service the shining locomotives and the clean coaches illustrated the pride which was still part of the WM.

Late in 1953 the K-2 oil burning Pacifics, #201, #202, #204 and #206 were replaced with Alco RS-3s. These engines were equipped with steam generators. The 202 is presently displayed in the Hagerstown city park. The 204 lasted a few years after 1953 at Port Covington in Baltimore as a stationary boiler to thaw ore and coal cars.

# 1 and # 4, the last passenger trains between Baltimore and Hagerstown, made their final trips on June 7, 1957. #9 and #10, between Cumberland, Maryland, and Elkins, West Virginia last ran on January 4, 1958.

The last WM passenger service was a tri-weekly mixed running between Elkins, and Durbin, West Virginia. This service was discontinued in 1959.

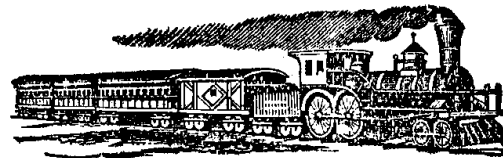
The steel underframe wood combine on this train is now at the Pennsylvania State RR Museum in Strasburg, Pa, as well as WM office car



#203, and one of the 800 series coaches that had ended its days as Rider Coach 200. This car, with combine #150, equipped with an Alco RS-3 steam generator, was used on various rail excursions during the 1960s and 1970s on the WM.

A RPO/baggage car, formerly in work train service, has been preserved by a model railroad club in New Oxford, Pennsylvania. It is located behind the former WM station, just off Route 30. The balance of the WM passenger equipment was sold to South America, if the rumors can be believed. A few pieces landed in MofW service, then being scrapped by the Chessie System.

WM passenger service contributed very little to the bottom line of the company's income, but in spite of this, the locos and the cars were always shiny clean and well maintained. I feel fortunate to have traveled on the WM; the good memories remain with me.



#### **WESTERNMD. R. R. TIME TABLE**

Daily except Sunday.

Trains for Baltimore leave Smithsburg, Express 8:21 a. m. Mail 2:55 p. m. Trains for Shippensburg leave Smithsburg Accommodation, 6:55 a. m. ditto 11:29 a. m. ditto 7:29 p. m.

Trains for Hagerstown leave Smithsburg Accommodation 8:39 a. m. ditto 11:46 a. m. ditto, 3:11 p. m. ditto 5:36 p. m. Express 7:46 p. m.

J. M. Hood, B. H. Griswold  
Gen'l manager. Gen'l ticket ag't.  
J. T. Towson, Ag't Smithsburg.



With the engineer oblivious to the photographer, Western Maryland 0-8-0 #1053 chuffs along performing its switching duties at Hagerstown, MD, on this 24th day of April in 1938. Photo by Fales. Art Towson collection.

## **Nominations**

Any current member interested in running for an officer position of the Southeast Chapter of the Railway & Locomotive Historical Society should contact Jim Smith at POBox 664, Jacksonville FL 32201. Nominations must be received by our November 8th meeting.

## **Minutes of the Southeast Chapter, Railway & Locomotive Historical Society**

The July meeting of the Southeast Chapter of the Railway and Locomotive historical Society was held in the 13th Floor Conference Room of the CSXT GOB on Thursday, July 9, 1998 at 6:00 P.M. A quorum was present. Chapter Chairperson Jim Smith chaired the meeting. The minutes from the June, 1998, meeting were approved. The Treasurer reported \$1436.33 in the two Coastline Federal Credit Union accounts with \$490.27 in checking and \$946.06 in savings. There are bills of \$1034 outstanding including \$945 due to National for dues.

### Old business:

The blue book for the reprint of the Florida railroad history R&LHS Bulletin has been received and should be sent back this week. A sub-committee is working on the price, cover, ads, and future action.

Chairman Smith informed the group of the Scranton Rail Camp. Art Towson agreed to head a committee to determine if the chapter will sponsor a person to next year's camp, Sales of the Bill McCoy slide collection will begin in the August meeting.

A committee to look into publishing a Southeast Photo Book from the Swingbe Collection was appointed with Mark Bennett, Art Towson, and Barry Baines.

### New Business:

The chapter has been invited to a Florida Live Steamers show July 25-26.

### Committee Reports:

There were no committee reports.

### Announcements:

Dues are due.

The August 13 meeting will feature a slide auction and refreshments furnished by Jim Wilk. For the meeting on September 10, Paul Newson will be the presenter. October 8 will be the annual photo contest and goodies from Arby.

Respectfully submitted,



## **October 8th Meeting**

**Annual slide contest. Remember, there are no restrictions, no year or time of year (although snowy winter scenes seem to win), no theme, but you can only submit six, count'em, one, two, three, four, five, six slides per person. There will be some prizes too. Plan to have an enjoyable evening looking at some funky slides and then we will sell some too. See you on the 8th.**

# It's Here!!!

The Southeast Chapter is proud to announce the arrival of its first book. It is a reprint of R&LHS **Bulletin #86, The Story of Florida Railroads**, by George W. Pettengill, Jr. The book also contains "additions" published in **Bulletin #88**. First



published in 1952, the reprint covers the early history of Florida's railroads up through of the turn of the century. An order form is enclosed. Your patronage is appreciated. Normally \$13.95, our reprint is on sale to SE Chapter members for only \$10.00.

## Order Now!

---

---

Railway & Locomotive Historical Society  
Southeast Chapter  
P. O. Box 664  
Jacksonville, Florida 32201