



## DREAMS AND DOLDRUMS

1865 - 1911



The onetime Washington, Ohio & Western's No. 8, built in Rome, N.Y. in 1885, sits forlornly at Alexandria awaiting scrap in 1913. By then renumbered Southern Ry. 3770, it had served the line for a quarter of a century. (*K. E. Schlachter*)

When the dust cleared the unfortunate Lewis McKenzie faced a daunting job. He now had a battered railroad as far west as Vienna and not much of anything beyond there. And since the Federal government had viewed the Alexandria, Loudoun & Hampshire as an "enemy railroad" it offered nothing to rehabilitate the line. (This must have been especially galling to McKenzie, who had been a staunch Unionist before and during the war—a position not popular with his Alexandria friends.) Not only was the state of Virginia clearly in no position to help, but it was anxious to liquidate its stock holdings—forcing McKenzie and his associates to arrange to buy out the state's stake. Until that was accomplished in 1867, the state effectively held a lien on the property and the

AL&H's management had only limited freedom to spend money.

Somehow McKenzie managed to patch up the railroad, although it took time. As best anyone can determine now, the line's three original locomotives came home—doubtless also needing patching up—and a fourth was acquired as surplus from the government and rebuilt in the Alexandria shop. By January 1866 the railroad was only open as far west as Hunter's Mill and Thornton, less than seven miles beyond Vienna. It was not until June 1867 that trains could operate all the way to Leesburg again.

By 1868 the road was finally whole, with a roster of four locomotives, four passenger coaches, two mail and express cars, and 43 assorted freight cars—most



Trains of the Washington, Ohio & Western and its successors used the Pennsylvania Railroad's impressive 1872 Washington terminal at 6th and B Streets, N.W.—now the site of the National Gallery of Art's West Building. The PRR and all railroads from the south crossed the Mall to enter the station, shown here about 1895. (*Harwood collection*)

of the latter war surplus. One passenger train was scheduled each way, leaving Alexandria at 8 a.m. and returning from Leesburg at 12:15 in the afternoon. The trip took two hours. The stage connections between Leesburg and Winchester via Purcellville and Berryville operated only three days a week.

But beyond putting its existing line into shape, the AL&H never seemed to get going again, and for the next 20 years it followed an erratic course to nowhere. Westward construction resumed, but listlessly; by the end of 1868 the rails had progressed as far west as Clarke's Gap, three and a half miles from Leesburg, on grading completed before the war. The goal was still the upper Potomac coal fields via Winchester, and a new route was surveyed across the Blue Ridge hump, this time through Snicker's Gap, several miles south of the original survey. This involved leaving the originally

planned route west of Clarke's Gap and heading slightly southwest to Snickersville (now Bluemont) at the base of the Blue Ridge, about 13 miles.

The ultimate terminal also was shifted six miles farther west from Paddytown (Keyser) to Piedmont, now in the new state of West Virginia; there it could connect not only with the B&O (which probably would be unfriendly) but with the Cumberland & Pennsylvania Railroad, which reached mines in the Georges Creek and Mount Savage areas of Maryland. Continuing to creep forward, track reached Hamilton by March 1870, and at the same time passenger service was increased to two scheduled round trips a day—the traditional morning turn out of Alexandria, which carried the mail, and a slower local which left Hamilton at 5:30 a.m. and returned west from Alexandria at 5 p.m.



Southern R. R. Station, Bluemont, Va.

The railroad's final terminal turned out to be Bluemont, Virginia, 54 miles from Alexandria at the base of the Blue Ridge. The aesthetic Southern Railway frame station later burned and was replaced by a simpler structure. At the left is the grain elevator, Bluemont's major landmark and chief freight customer for the railroad here. (Thomas Underwood collection)

By then, however, McKenzie and his group had unaccountably veered off in a far more ambitious direction. They now changed their goal to the Ohio River at Point Pleasant, West Virginia, about midway between Parkersburg and present-day Huntington and roughly 325 miles from Alexandria. The new route would cut across West Virginia about midway between the Baltimore & Ohio's main line on the north and the Chesapeake & Ohio, then under construction to the south, and pass through some of the state's finest virgin coal country on the way. To conform with a new charter from the state of West Virginia, the AL&H was renamed the Washington & Ohio Railroad on July 26, 1870, with authorized new capital stock of \$15 million.

What inspired this vaulting vision in a group which seemed barely able to get their railroad beyond Leesburg is now unknown. But it should be noted that the railroad environment was then changing dramatically. The Golden Spike was driven in 1869 and rails now reached all the way to the Pacific. The original concept of regional and localized lines promoted or

supported by individual cities or states was fast giving way to large, competitive trunk line systems dominated by various northern entrepreneurs. Railroad enthusiasm was high and money was flowing into new projects everywhere.

As a result, railroading became a high-stakes game of power politics, with the national railroad map changing rapidly. And nowhere was that map more in flux than the entire region south of the Potomac. In 1870 Collis P. Huntington was in the process of building his Chesapeake & Ohio from Richmond to the Ohio River, creating a wholly new trunk line across Virginia and West Virginia. At the same time both the Pennsylvania Railroad and the Baltimore & Ohio's John W. Garrett were competing with each other to create extensive southern systems as adjuncts to their expanding eastern and midwestern lines. Garrett bought control of the merged Orange & Alexandria and Manassas Gap roads and, it was said, intended eventually to reach New Orleans. The Pennsylvania was then building a line into Washington which it would extend toward Richmond;



An eastbound Southern Railway wayfreight pauses at Herndon about 1908. (*David Marcham collection*)

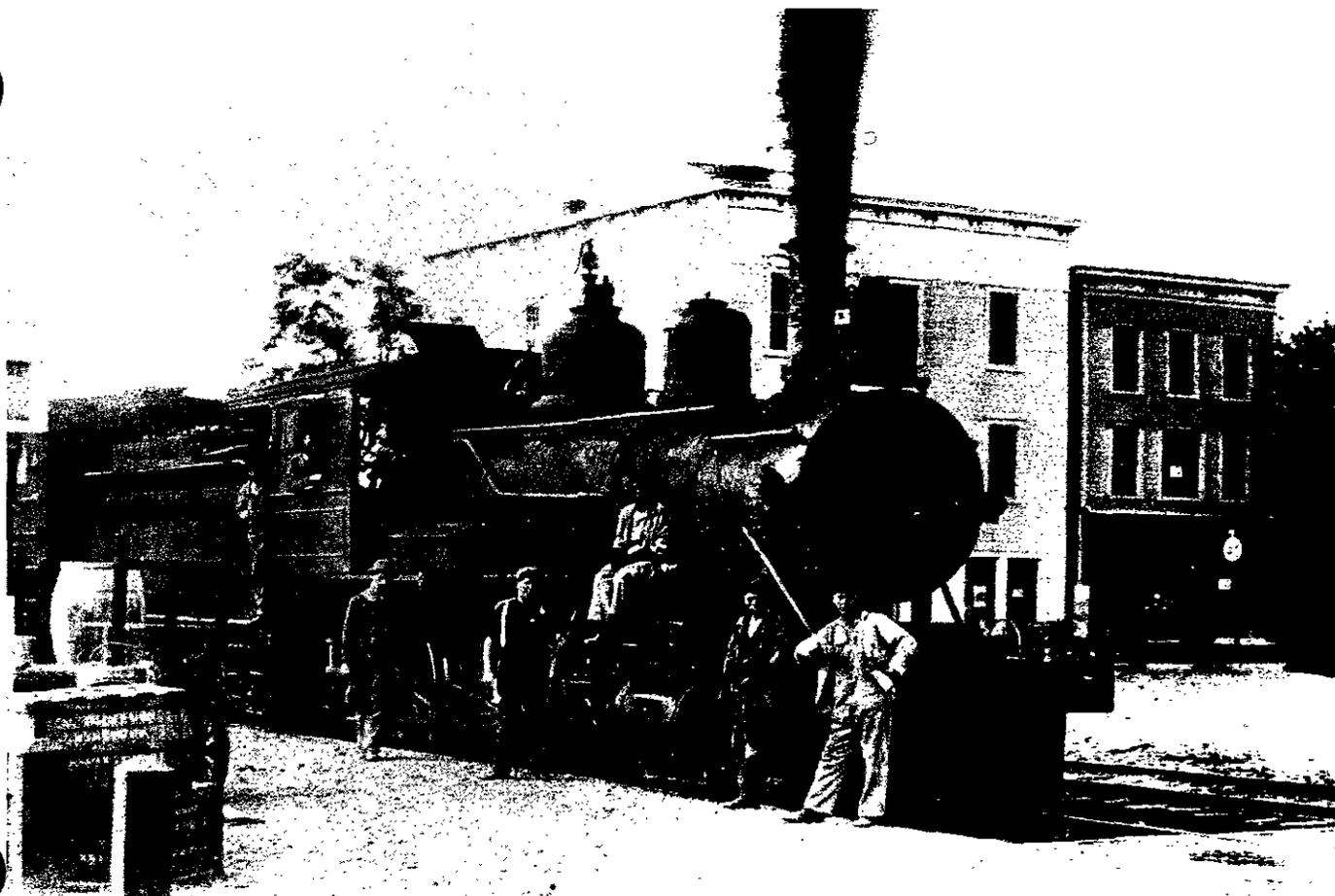
soon afterward it would start gobbling up lines through the Piedmont south of Richmond heading toward Atlanta and Memphis. Baltimore financier William T. Walters, a PRR ally, simultaneously started assembling what became the Atlantic Coast Line system.

In short, it was a turbulent era of railroad expansion and empire-building, with potentially lucrative opportunities for those who moved fast and surely. Perhaps the McKenzie group thought it could be a contender in this arena. Or, perhaps, it thought that its expansive new charter would make the railroad an attractive purchase for one of the new empire builders.

Either way it was a forlorn hope. The new Washington & Ohio could do no better than inch forward a few more miles. It was not until April 1874 that the rails arrived in Purcellville, four miles from Hamilton. By the end of that year they had reached Round Hill, a hamlet in the Blue Ridge foothills three miles from Purcellville and about 50 miles from Alexandria. And there the Washington & Ohio heaved a sigh and stopped for good.

The first mountain was still in the distance but the old bugbear of money continued to haunt the project. The company's gross revenues, which wavered around \$100,000 a year, were barely adequate to meet its operating expenses, much less finance building a railroad through 275 miles of mountain wilderness. In addition the timing was disastrous. The depression which followed a financial panic in 1873 dried up whatever capital McKenzie may have hoped for. (He was hardly alone; many railroads, especially in the South, were in receivership and even the mighty Pennsylvania and Baltimore & Ohio were forced to give up their southern adventures.) Furthermore his company still owed the State of Virginia for its buyout of the state's stock. Out of a \$9 million bond issue authorized when the Washington & Ohio was organized, only \$235,000 was actually issued and interest payments on this and its earlier debt were problematical.

For one day, at least, the struggling railroad could bask in some glory: in November 1873 President Ulysses S. Grant took his entire cabinet on a special



While waiting at Herndon, the same train's crew drapes itself over its steed, a 2-8-0 Consolidation inherited from the Richmond & Danville. (David Marcham collection)

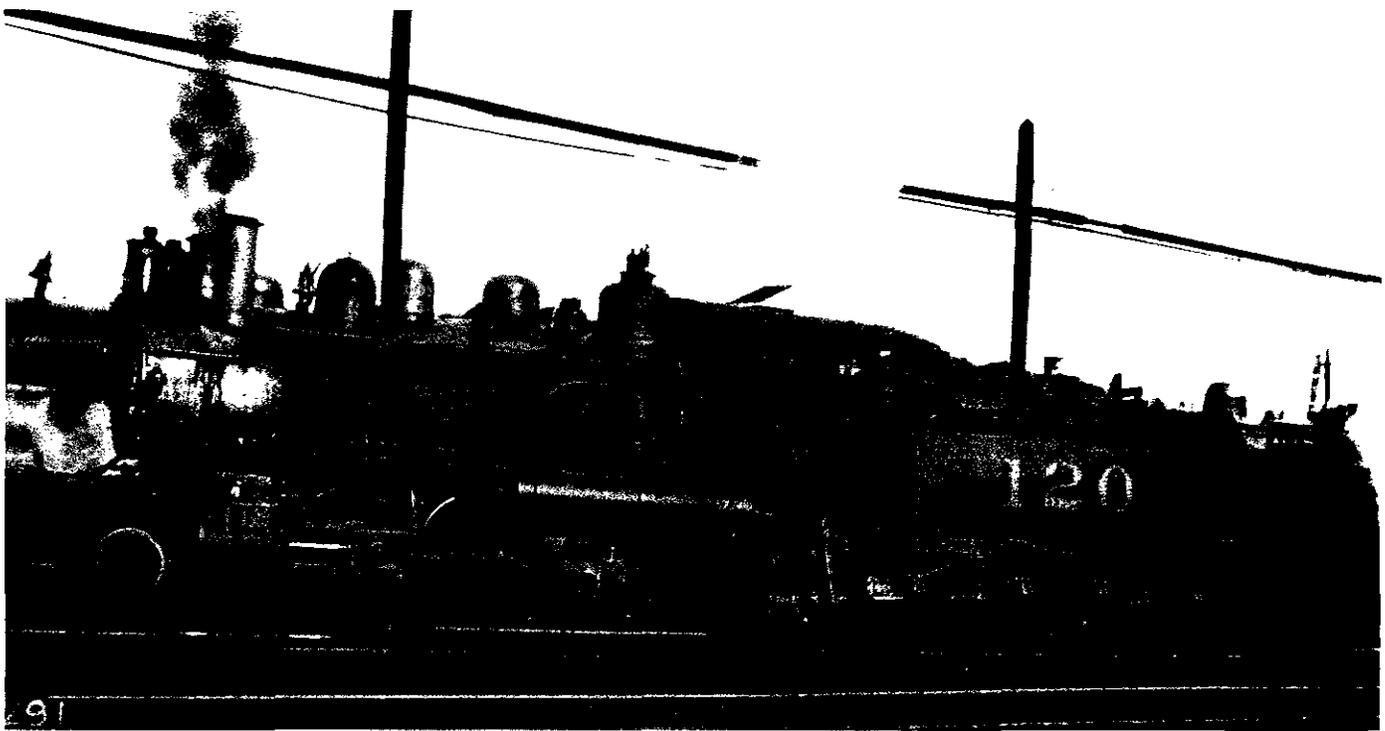
train to Leesburg, where the august group spent the day at the Loudoun County Fair.

The end for McKenzie came February 9, 1878, when the Washington & Ohio formally went into receivership. Although there would be a few false promises over the next decade, Alexandria's will-o-the-wisp dreams of western expansion were finished, and the original management which had suffered with the railroad since the 1850s retired from the scene.

Afterward the company drifted along until the spring of 1882 when it was finally sold and reorganized as the Washington & Western. The new owners were loosely allied to a scheme to build a new trunk line railroad between Washington and Cincinnati via Leesburg, Winchester, and the W&O's planned route through West Virginia—a typically quixotic late 19th century promotion which, mercifully, vaporized almost immediately. The buyers defaulted on the first installment of the \$400,000 purchase price and the moribund railroad was put on the block again.

This time the purchasers were a group of New York financial speculators, who took control on June 12, 1883 and renamed their property the Washington, Ohio & Western. The new title implied even grander goals, but in fact the new owners were mostly interested in selling or leasing the line to some other railroad which might consider it strategic. To make it more attractive, they embarked on a modest modernization program which included three new eight-wheelers from the New York Locomotive Works at Rome, additional cars, gradual replacement of the old 52-pound iron rail with new 60-pound steel, and some iron bridges to replace the wooden structures.

Their most likely target was the Shenandoah Valley Railroad, which had opened a line down the Valley from Roanoke, Virginia to Hagerstown, Maryland. The Shenandoah Valley had just been taken over by the expanding Norfolk & Western, which was anxious to reach other northeastern gateways and particularly coveted Washington. Its line passed through



Southern Ry. No. 120 was another typical example of the freight power which worked the Bluemont Branch in the early 1900s. Shown at Alexandria in 1912, the 1888 Baldwin product was a hand-me-down from the East Tennessee, Virginia & Georgia Railroad. (K. E. Schlachter)

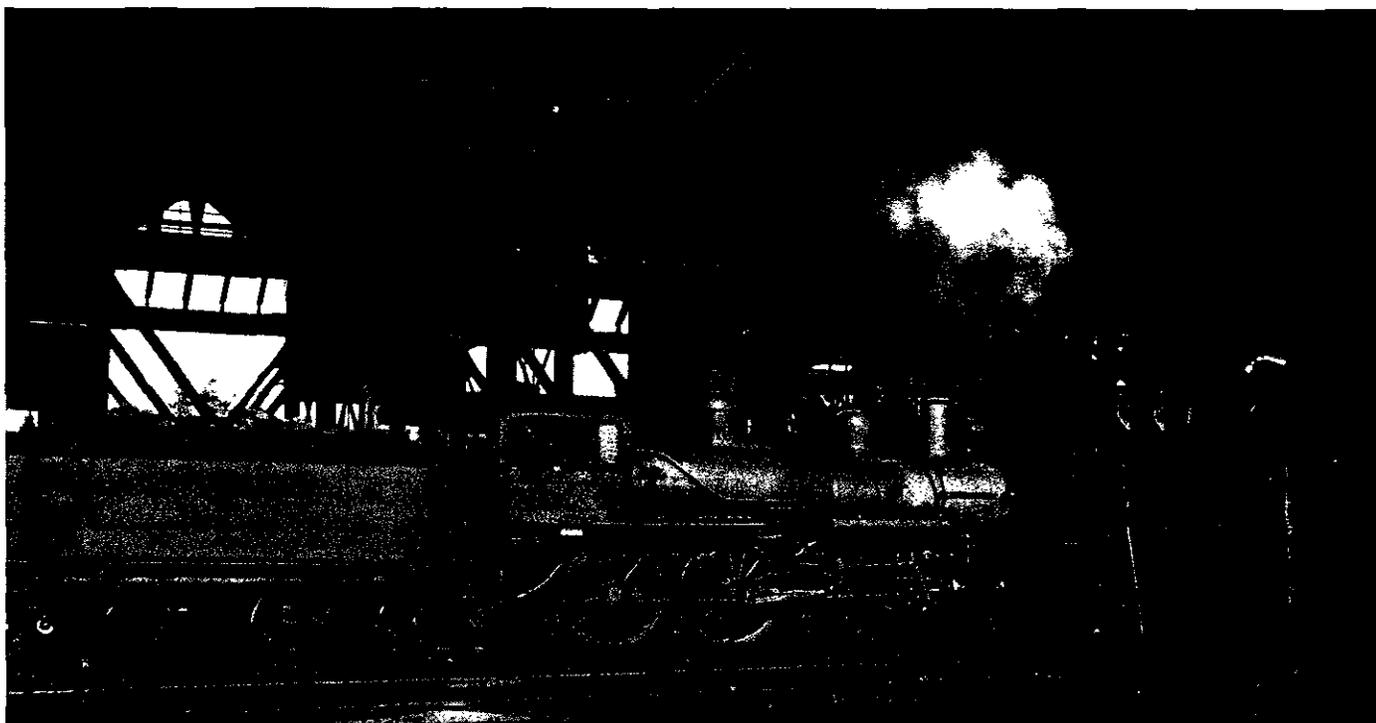
Berryville, on the west side of the Blue Ridge opposite Snicker's Gap and only about 13 miles from the end of the WO&W track at Round Hill. Back in February 1883 the Shenandoah Valley had attempted to lease the earlier Washington & Ohio, but hesitated and then lost its option when the railroad was sold to the new group in June. Afterward the WO&W's owners tried to bargain a higher price by playing the Shenandoah Valley off against the Baltimore & Ohio, to no avail. In March 1885 they finally succumbed and approached the Shenandoah Valley with more favorable lease terms, but nothing came of it.

At about the same time, another kind of hope glimmered and then winked out. In 1880 a group of entrepreneurs headed by Henry Gassaway Davis and Stephen B. Elkins had incorporated a pair of railroads to connect huge tracts of virgin West Virginia coal and lumber lands with the outside world. One, the Virginia & West Virginia Railroad, would extend east to a tidewater port at Alexandria. The WO&W was an obvious candidate to form the line's eastern end, and its new owners took some tentative legal steps to allow the two enterprises to join. Davis and Elkins did complete another railroad north to meet the B&O at Piedmont and later Cumberland, but their Alexandria

project disappeared into limbo. As it turned out, however, Elkins was not finished with the old WO&W. Although he hardly imagined it at the time, he would reappear three decades later to change its form and fix its ultimate fate.

But for the time being, the WO&W's destiny was sealed in 1886 when it was leased and eventually bought by another evolving southern system, the Richmond & Danville. Once part of the Pennsylvania Railroad's aborted postwar expansion into the South, the R&D had passed to a varying group of New York financiers which included steamship operator William P. Clyde, cotton broker John H. Inman, and banker George S. Scott. In 1881 it took over the Virginia Midland, the successor to the Orange & Alexandria and Manassas Gap railroads, which the Baltimore & Ohio had tried to use in its own doomed southern invasion. By the mid-1880s the expanding Richmond & Danville controlled a main line from Washington to Atlanta with several major branches and was the key subsidiary of a jerry-built holding company the New Yorkers had put together called the Richmond & West Point Terminal & Warehouse Company.

In gathering up the WO&W, the New York empire builders had no illusions about its earning power



The Southern also sometimes assigned its regal F8-class Ten Wheelers to Bluemont passenger trains. No. 919 poses at the large Alexandria coaling trestle in 1912. (K. E. Schlachter)

or its future; they were primarily concerned with neutralizing it to head off any invasion of their territory by the Norfolk & Western or some other poacher.

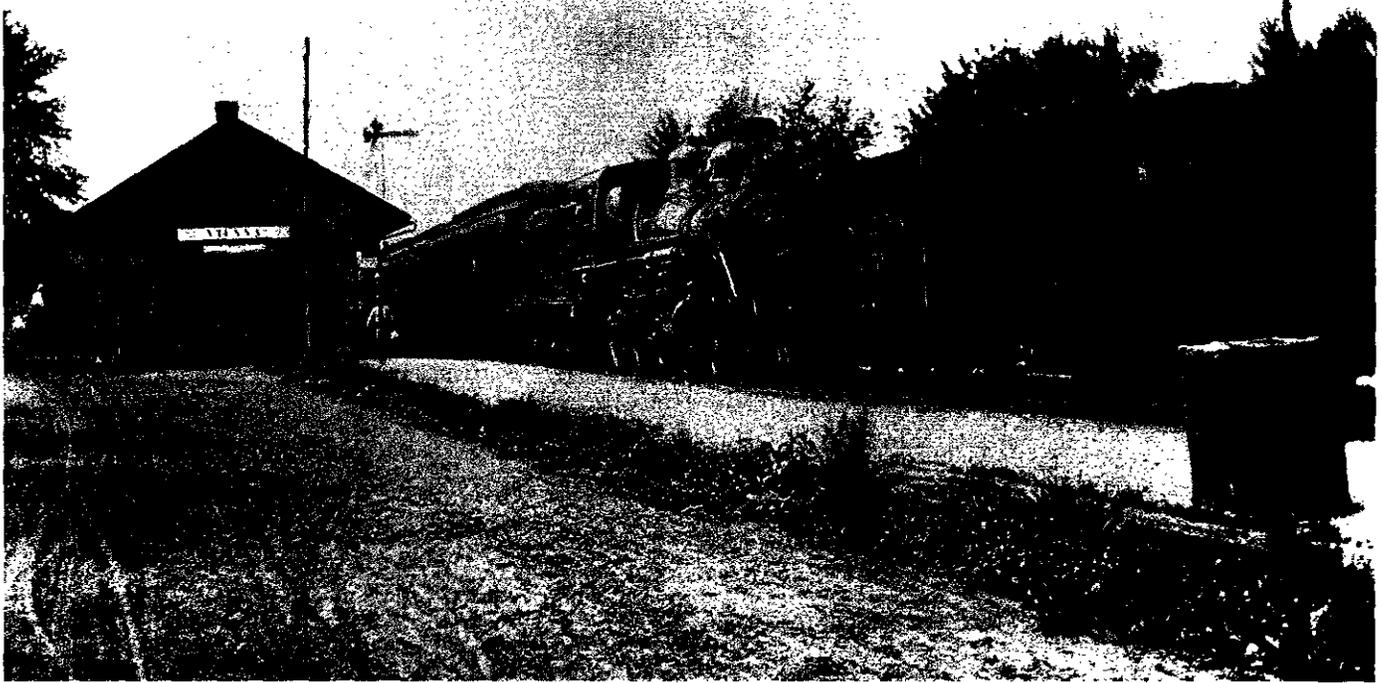
On October 30, 1886 the Richmond & Danville leased the Washington, Ohio & Western, and although the WO&W continued as a legally separate company for another eight years its independent life ceased. For operating purposes it was tied to the R&D's Virginia Midland subsidiary, superintended from the VM's Alexandria facilities, with its equipment based there.

The new affiliation also made the "Washington" in the old railroad's title finally come true. Like the WO&W, the Virginia Midland terminated in Alexandria, but its passenger trains continued into Washington over the onetime Alexandria & Washington route—by then a Pennsylvania Railroad subsidiary—and used the PRR's impressive 1872 terminal on the Mall at 6th and B Streets (now the site of the National Gallery of Art's West Building). The WO&W connected with the Alexandria & Washington at Alexandria Junction, two miles northwest of its own Alexandria terminal, which by the early 1880s was a formal freight and passenger transfer point. Beginning in 1888 WO&W passenger trains were directly routed into Washington and Alexandria became a secondary terminal served by a local mixed passenger and

freight run. In effect, Alexandria was now just a branchline point on its own railroad.

The R&D also began putting modest amounts of money into the line, replacing some stations and bridges, and upgrading other facilities. But throughout all these corporate shuffles the railhead remained at Round Hill and the railroad continued to be merely an amiable and low-key country cousin, operating a pair of leisurely local passenger and mail trains each way plus a local freight dispatched from Alexandria, where it interchanged cars with the Virginia Midland and Pennsylvania Railroad. Away from the mainstream it sometimes took a casual attitude toward operations. One Christmas Day in the 1870s, for example, the crew of a Round Hill train absorbed too much holiday cheer en route. Reaching the end of the line they ran the locomotive onto the turntable—and straight off the other side into the bushes, where it turned over. Tragically the fireman was crushed to death in the wreckage.

By 1893 traffic had risen to the point where the Richmond & Danville advertised four passenger trains each way—two between Washington and Round Hill, one between Washington and Leesburg, and one to Herndon. Three of these were operated on what amounted to commuter schedules, arriving in Washington before 9 a.m. and leaving after 4:30 p.m. The



Eastbound Southern Railway train 126, an early morning express from Bluemont, wheels into Vienna in 1909. Another F8 Ten Wheeler provides the power. (*Library of Congress*)

fastest train, making only four stops east of Leesburg, covered the 54 miles from Washington to Round Hill in exactly two hours; its all-stops companion train on the run took two and a half hours.

Although the WO&W had found a corporate shelter, it was still an unstable one. Mismanaged by financial speculators, the Richmond & West Point Terminal & Warehouse Company wobbled toward collapse, and in 1892 several of its investors approached J. P. Morgan for a rescue. After one false start, Morgan took control of the Richmond Terminal and in 1894 reorganized it as the Southern Railway, a huge system reaching almost every major point between the Potomac River and the Gulf of Mexico. On June 28th of that year all of the Richmond & Danville properties—including the Washington, Ohio & Western—were integrated into Morgan's new creation, which formally began operation July first and brought genuine stability for the first time.

Afterward the new owner continued the Richmond & Danville's improvement program and even extended the line a short distance. In 1900 it laid four miles of track west from Round Hill to Snickersville, the tiny

town at the base of the Blue Ridge where Washington & Ohio surveyors had laid out their Snicker's Gap route 30 years before. (Most of the new extension, in fact, was built on unfinished Washington & Ohio grading.) But there were no grand plans this time. The railroad's proximity to the mountains had made it a favorite with Washingtonians escaping from the capital's semitropical summer heat and humidity. Snickersville was an easy jumping-off point for stage and cab connections up into the green-covered slopes where picnickers and vacationers could get breathtaking views of the Shenandoah Valley and the Loudoun County farmlands. Concurrent with the coming of the railroad, Snickersville was rechristened with the more alluring name of Bluemont, and the railroad line itself was officially labeled as the Bluemont Branch.

And a typical late 19th century branch line it was. An assortment of light-duty steam engines chuffed through the northern Virginia countryside trailing from two to four wood cars carrying mixed complements of milk, mail, express packages, local passengers, and excursionists. Depending on the season, from four to six daily passenger trips rolled each way between the



A Southern 4-4-0 simmers with a westbound local at Herndon at midday about 1905. Note the apparently empty milk cans which were probably just unloaded. Immediately to the left of the locomotive is a ventilated boxcar used for shipping fruits and vegetables. (Thomas Underwood collection)

Pennsylvania's 6th and B Streets terminal in Washington and Bluemont, and nonstop expresses took tourists to the Blue Ridge on summer weekends. A connecting passenger service shuttled between the old AL&H passenger depot near Alexandria's waterfront and Alexandria Junction, where it met the Washington trains. One local freight train a day operating from the Southern's Alexandria yard usually sufficed for the grain, fertilizer, brick, lumber, livestock, and other commerce of an agricultural countryside.

Physically, the legacy of the old Alexandria, Loudoun & Hampshire's shoestring finances showed in a lightly graded single-track railroad which rose and fell with the gentle land contours. From Alexandria to Falls Church the rails followed Four Mile Run steadily upgrade through a winding, wooded valley; the track curved back and forth across the stream,

through deep woods and past small gristmills and farms. Beyond Falls Church the route headed mostly in a straight line across country, following no particular natural course through rolling Piedmont farmlands. While this country was not rugged, the line generally ran at right angles to the drainage pattern with the result that the track seemed to be constantly dipping down into little stream valleys and climbing back out. Difficult Run, Broad Run, Goose Creek, and a multitude of minor streams all gave the line a sawtooth profile as it worked its way west. By the time the line reached Leesburg it had climbed or dropped through 21 major grades, yet ended up at virtually the same elevation it had left at Falls Church.

West of Leesburg the countryside changed and the rails climbed up the Catoctin ridge to a 582-foot summit at Clarke's Gap. At this point the Catoctin—a spur



The 1887 Leesburg station was the most elaborate on the Bluemont Branch. Shown here in 1906, it was built to a standardized Richmond & Danville design which was repeated with variations at several other points in Virginia. Leesburg and Round Hill boasted the line's only purely passenger stations; all others also handled freight. (*Elizabeth Cole*)

of the Blue Ridge which reached south from Maryland—was not much more than a large hill, but it was the precursor of the mountain range itself. The line passed through the summit in a deep cut, bisected overhead by a stone highway bridge carrying present Dry Mill Road (old Virginia Route 7). Beyond Clarke's Gap was more uphill and downhill running as the route passed through Purcellville and Round Hill before dead-ending in the mountain's shadow at Bluemont.

Despite the numerous grades—in all, over 60 per cent of the line was on grades ranging from 0.9 per cent to 1.5 per cent—the light trains never demanded heavy motive power. Typically, they were hauled by tired hand-me-downs from mainline service—classic eight-wheelers (including the WO&W's three), light

Ten-wheelers, and Consolidations inherited from the Richmond & Danville and other Southern Railway predecessors. In the later years of Southern ownership the railroad sometimes assigned its new and handsome heavy Ten-wheelers and in 1911, in an experiment to cut costs, it tried out a new type of railroad vehicle—a self-powered gas-electric coach just introduced by General Electric. The new car, one of the earliest significant attempts at combining internal combustion power and electric drive, was assigned to a Washington-Leesburg commuter schedule.

Reflecting the railroad's rural territory and its poverty-level life, Bluemont Branch way stations were invariably wood frame buildings. Most were simple single-story structures typical of all-purpose country

# Southern Railway Company

Passenger Traffic Department.

CIRCULAR No. 9816.

File M 936

WASHINGTON, D. C., May 24, 1911.

Inauguration of Summer Schedule between Washington, D. C., and Bluemont, Va., affording most convenient service.

EFFECTIVE SUNDAY, MAY 28, 1911.

## COMPLETE SCHEDULE BETWEEN WASHINGTON AND BLUEMONT.

WESTBOUND. EASTERN TIME.	No. 121 Ex. Sun.	No. 129 Sun. Only	No. 131 Sun. Only	No. 123 Ex. Sun.	No. 125 Ex. Sun.	No. 133 Daily.	No. 119 Ex. Sun.
Lv. Washington, D. C.	8.10 am	8.55 am	9.15 am	1.30 pm	4.20 pm	5.05 pm	6.25 pm
" Alexandria	8.22 "	9.02 "	9.22 "	1.40 "	4.28 "	5.15 "	6.33 "
" Alexandria Jct.	8.30 "	9.12 "	9.34 "	1.49 "	4.37 "	5.24 "	6.41 "
" Cowdon	f 8.35 "		f 9.38 "	f 1.53 "		f 5.29 "	f 6.44 "
" Barcroft	f 8.43 "		f 9.41 "	f 1.55 "		f 5.33 "	f 6.47 "
" Glencarlyn	8.45 "		9.43 "	f 1.57 "		f 5.35 "	f 6.50 "
" Torrison	f 8.46 "		f 9.44 "	f 1.58 "		f 5.37 "	f 6.52 "
" Fostoria	f 8.48 "		f 9.46 "	f 2.00 "		f 5.40 "	f 6.54 "
" Falls Church	8.49 "		9.49 "	2.04 "		5.43 "	6.56 "
" West Falls Church	8.52 "		9.53 "	2.07 "		5.49 "	6.59 "
" Dunn Loring	8.56 "		9.58 "	f 2.12 "		f 5.54 "	f 7.07 "
" Wedderburn	f 8.58 "		f 10.01 "	f 2.14 "		f 5.57 "	f 7.11 "
" Vienna	9.02 "		f 10.09 "	2.21 "	5.06 "	6.06 "	7.14 "
" Hunter	f 9.08 "		f 10.16 "	f 2.27 "		f 6.14 "	f 7.19 "
" Wiehle	f 9.14 "		f 10.24 "	f 2.34 "		f 6.24 "	f 7.27 "
" Herndon	9.20 "		10.31 "	2.41 "	f 5.19 "	6.34 "	7.34 "
" Sterling	9.29 "		10.40 "	2.51 "		6.45 "	7.43 "
" Ashburn	9.40 "		10.49 "	3.02 "		6.55 "	7.51 "
" Belmont Park	f 9.47 "		10.55 "	f 3.09 "		f 7.02 "	f 7.56 "
" Leesburg	9.50 "	10.23 "	11.00 "	3.16 "	5.39 "	7.07 "	8.05 pm
" Clarke's Gap	f 10.05 "		f 11.10 "	f 3.28 "		f 7.17 "	
" Paeonian Springs	10.08 "	10.35 "	11.13 "	3.29 "	f 5.49 "	7.21 "	
" Hamilton	10.13 "	10.40 "	11.18 "	3.34 "	5.54 "	7.24 "	
" Purcellville	10.24 "	10.49 "	11.29 "	3.44 "	6.02 "	7.32 "	
" Round Hill	10.34 "	10.56 "	11.38 "	3.53 "	6.09 "	7.38 "	
Ar. Bluemont	10.45 am	11.05 am	11.50 am	4.05 pm	6.20 pm	7.45 pm	

## BETWEEN BLUEMONT AND WASHINGTON.

EASTBOUND EASTERN TIME.	No. 120 Ex. Sun.	No. 134 Daily.	No. 126 Ex. Sun.	No. 122 Ex. Sun.	No. 124 Daily.	No. 130 Sun. Only
Lv. Bluemont		5.50 am	7.15 am	12.15 pm	5.25 pm	6.45 pm
" Round Hill		5.59 "	7.23 "	12.25 "	5.35 "	6.53 "
" Purcellville		6.08 "	7.29 "	12.33 "	5.43 "	6.59 "
" Hamilton		6.15 "	7.36 "	12.40 "	5.54 "	7.07 "
" Paeonian Springs		6.18 "	7.39 "	12.45 "	5.57 "	7.11 "
" Clarke's Gap		f 6.21 "		f 12.48 "	f 6.00 "	
" Leesburg	6.10 am	6.30 "	7.51 "	1.00 "	6.10 "	7.25 "
" Belmont Park	f 6.18 "	f 6.37 "		f 1.08 "	f 6.18 "	
" Ashburn	6.25 "	f 6.44 "		1.15 "	6.22 "	
" Sterling	6.31 "	f 6.55 "		1.24 "	6.28 "	
" Herndon	6.43 "	f 7.02 "	f 8.13 "	1.30 "	6.34 "	
" Wiehle	f 6.49 "	f 7.18 "		f 1.37 "	f 6.41 "	
" Hunter	f 6.55 "	f 7.24 "		f 1.42 "	f 6.48 "	
" Vienna	6.03 "	f 7.33 "	8.27 "	1.47 "	6.59 "	
" Wedderburn	f 6.07 "	f 7.37 "		f 1.51 "	f 7.04 "	
" Dunn Loring	6.10 "	7.40 "		1.54 "	7.07 "	
" West Falls Church	6.15 "	f 7.46 "		1.58 "	7.12 "	
" Falls Church	6.19 "	f 7.50 "		2.04 "	7.15 "	
" Fostoria	f 6.20 "	f 7.52 "		f 2.06 "	f 7.17 "	
" Torrison	f 6.23 "	f 7.55 "		f 2.08 "	f 7.19 "	
" Glencarlyn	f 6.26 "	f 7.57 "		f 2.10 "	f 7.20 "	
" Barcroft	f 6.29 "	f 8.00 "		f 2.13 "	f 7.23 "	
" Cowdon	f 6.32 "	f 8.05 "		f 2.19 "	f 7.27 "	
" Alexandria Jct.	6.38 "	8.15 "	8.55 "	2.29 "	7.40 "	8.35 "
" Alexandria		8.21 "	9.02 "	3.37 "	7.47 "	
Ar. Washington, D. C.	6.55 am	8.32 am	9.15 am	2.50 pm	8.00 pm	8.55 pm

NOTE—Nos. 119 and 120 are electric motor cars running between Leesburg and Washington. No baggage carried on these motor cars except small hand baggage carried by passengers.

E. H. COAPMAN,  
Vice President and General Manager  
2000-S-24-1911. D.

S. H. HARDWICK,  
Passenger Traffic Manager

H. F. CARY,  
General Passenger Agent

stations throughout the South, incorporating two "separate but equal" waiting rooms with an agent-operator's office between them, plus a section for handling and storing express and less-than-carload freight. (Only Leesburg and Round Hill had separate freight houses.) The majority dated to the 1870s and 1880s and were architecturally austere, although the Richmond & Danville and Southern Railway replaced several with more aesthetic designs.

The 1887 Leesburg passenger station was the most elegant variation of a standardized Richmond & Danville design developed in 1881 which the railroad called "Modern Swiss"; it included such Queen Anne touches such as fishscale shingles, diamond-shaped ventilator end openings, stained glass insets in the windows, and a decorative second-story porch with scrollsaw brackets. Falls Church, built in 1895, was a less elaborate version of the same basic pattern, and included the more usual freight section. This standard R&D design was also repeated at other Virginia locations such as Gainesville, Clifton, and Rapidan. (The Falls Church structure, incidentally, was the city's third. Both earlier stations were frugally relocated and recycled as commercial buildings nearby.) In the early 1900s the Southern built new stations at Purcellville, Round Hill, and, of course, Bluemont. All were different from one another but followed newer standard Southern patterns distinguished by their hip roofs and flared eaves.

Light-duty though it was, the branch proved the power of a railroad in creating and nurturing communities. Between Falls Church and Leesburg, for example, the line paralleled the old Alexandria-Leesburg turnpike (now Virginia Route 7) but was located between two and three miles to its south. Once the railroad opened, the entire social and commercial axis shifted away from the road; railroad towns such as Vienna, Herndon, Sterling, and Ashburn flourished while no comparable communities developed along the turnpike.

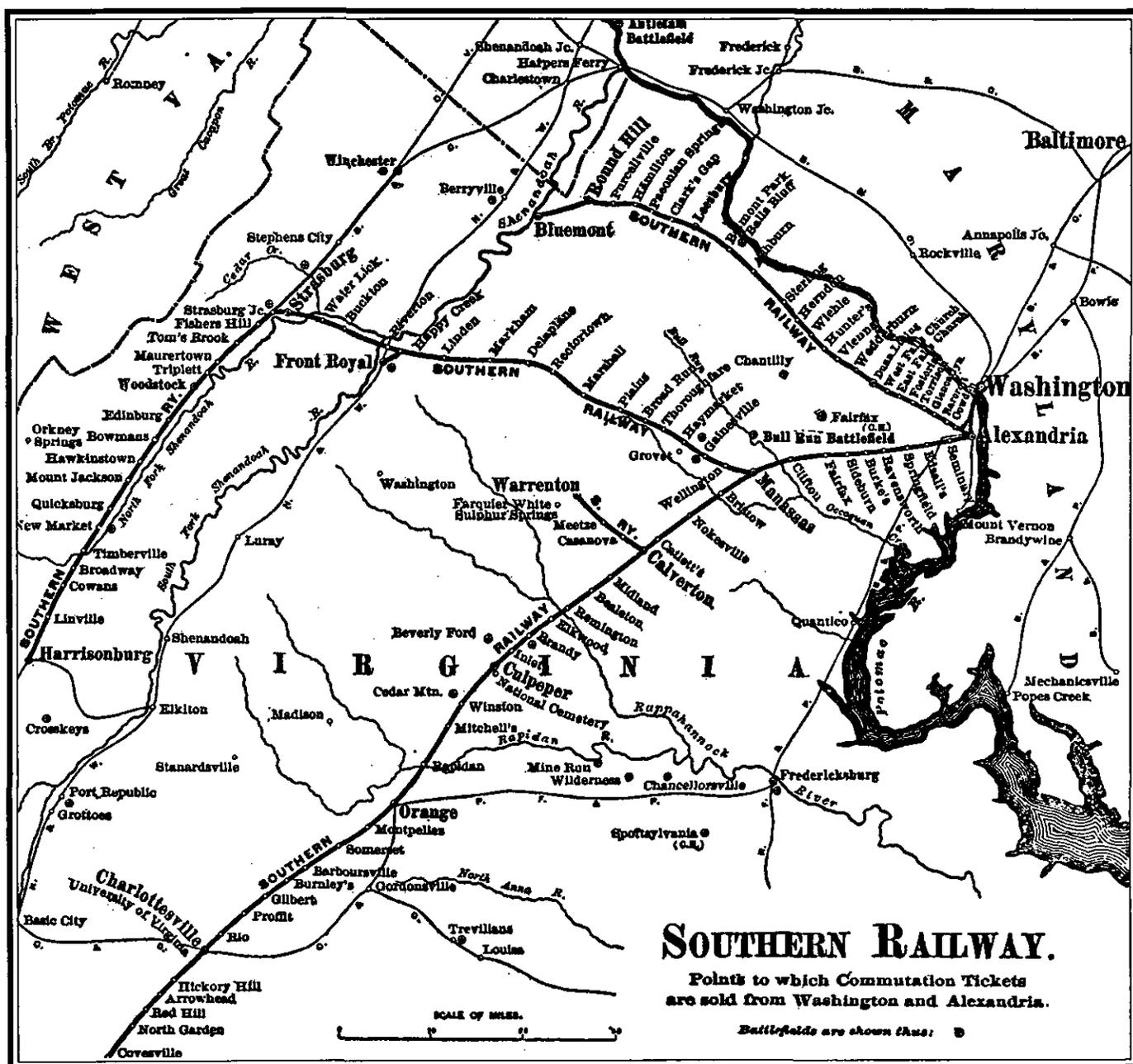
And while most of the line's environment was relentlessly rural, the presence of the railroad with its direct service into downtown Washington began to attract creative developers offering "country" homes for the city's middle and upper-middle class workers. Dunn Loring was an early example, laid out in 1886 by the Loring Land and Development Company midway between Falls Church and Vienna. A joint promotion by General W. M. Dunn (who lived at "Maplewood" on

Chain Bridge Road near present McLean) and Washington oculist George B. Loring, Dunn Loring consisted of one square mile of wooded property straddling the rail line, with its own gingerbread little station provided by the developers. (The elfin station, probably the most charming on the railroad, featured decorative door and window framing inspired by General Dunn's "Maplewood" mansion. It survived until 1960 as the town's post office.) The promoters' sales brochure emphasized that "the nearness of the town to Washington, being only 45 minutes from the Baltimore & Potomac [Pennsylvania Railroad] Station, renders it most desirable to persons employed in that city and wishing for a healthful country home."

A Philadelphia physician named Carl Wiehle was more visionary, dreaming of a wholly new suburban satellite town outside what was then the urban orbit. In 1887, a year after Dunn Loring was founded, Wiehle bought up large acreages along the Bluemont Branch two miles east of Herndon, and five years later had a German designer lay out a new planned community. Wiehle apparently was too far ahead of his time and too far out; when he died in 1901 the town of Wiehle had little more to show for itself than a rudimentary railroad station, a few houses, and a church. It remained that way until 1927, when A. Smith Bowman bought most of the property and renamed it Sunset Hills. When Prohibition ended Bowman built a bourbon distillery on part of the property along the railroad, but preserved the rest of it in a virtually virgin state. The long-delayed Wiehle dream finally did materialize, though. Sixty years after the doctor's death another entrepreneur bought most of the Bowman-Wiehle land and created the new town of Reston—one of the first of the fully planned satellite cities designed to solve some of the problems of urban and suburban overcivilization. By then, of course, the Wiehle name was only vaguely remembered—although the old Wiehle station still stood in 1999 as one reminder.

While Dunn Loring and Wiehle were slow starters, commuters were a major presence by the late 1880s. In 1888 one traveler who rode an early morning train into Washington reported that "every seat was occupied, principally by government employees, many of whom live at Falls Church, Vienna, Herndon, and other points."

The embryonic suburbs along the railroad's east end got a further boost beginning in the late 1890s when



The Southern Railway's lines in northern Virginia in 1911. The Bluemont Branch is the uppermost line. (Harwood collection)

crude early electric trolley lines began to reach into what is now Arlington County. In 1896 the Washington, Arlington & Falls Church Railway completed its line from the south end of the Aqueduct Bridge in Rosslyn to Falls Church. The Falls Church electric line was a mixed blessing: its bouncy little secondhand single-truck cars were not much to ride in, but they were cleaner and their hourly service was far more frequent than the steam trains. Getting into Washington was a chore, however, since at Rosslyn passengers had to hike across the Aqueduct Bridge to Georgetown to catch city streetcars downtown. In

1904 the WA&FC extended itself west from Falls Church, roughly paralleling the steam railroad as far as Vienna before swinging south to Fairfax Court House; by 1907 it had established a direct route into downtown Washington via Clarendon and the 14th Street Bridge, giving the Bluemont Branch some competition at Falls Church, Dunn Loring, and Vienna but also helping to develop that territory.

A major physical change came near the Bluemont Branch's eastern end in the early 1900s. By then Alexandria had become a major railroad gateway between the South and Northeast, and as north-south traffic

burgeoned the city's mid-19th century railroad layout—including long stretches of single track down the center of both Fayette and Henry Streets—became intolerably inadequate. The four railroads then using the gateway—the Pennsylvania, Baltimore & Ohio, Southern, and Chesapeake & Ohio—plus the Richmond, Fredericksburg & Potomac (which in turn fed the Atlantic Coast Line and Seaboard Air Line systems) joined in a massive project to build a new high-capacity main line alignment through the city and a huge freight classification yard on its north side. Potomac Yard, as it was called, was built directly through the Bluemont Branch's right-of-way, and the branch was

carried over the yard on a 1300-foot-long steel trestle, with interchange tracks built at its east end. Potomac Yard opened in 1906 and afterward the branch could directly connect with the five main-line railroads as well as its traditional junction with the Southern on the east side of Alexandria.

By all reasonable standards of railroad development, the Bluemont Branch should have spent the rest of its lifetime in its comfortable backwater, a minor appendage of a major system. But as it turned out, its most convulsive growing pains still lay ahead—for fate apparently was not ready to let this sleeping railroad lie.



A sedate cluster of turn-of-the-century passengers await their Washington train at Paeonian Springs, four and a half miles west of Leesburg in the Blue Ridge foothills. (To natives then, the place was often called simply "Paeony.") According to Interstate Commerce Commission records, the Southern built this rather plain combination passenger-freight station in 1901. (Thomas Underwood collection)

# THE GREAT FALLS TROLLEY

1905 - 1911



The Great Falls cars crossed the Potomac into Georgetown over the Aqueduct Bridge, originally built in 1888 on the piers of the Alexandria Canal aqueduct. This 1910 view looks southeast toward Rosslyn. At far right is the Washington, Arlington & Falls Church trolley terminal and the white structure with the tall stack is the GF&OD powerhouse. The C&O Canal is in the left foreground, ironically the only part of the scene surviving today. (*LeRoy O. King collection*)

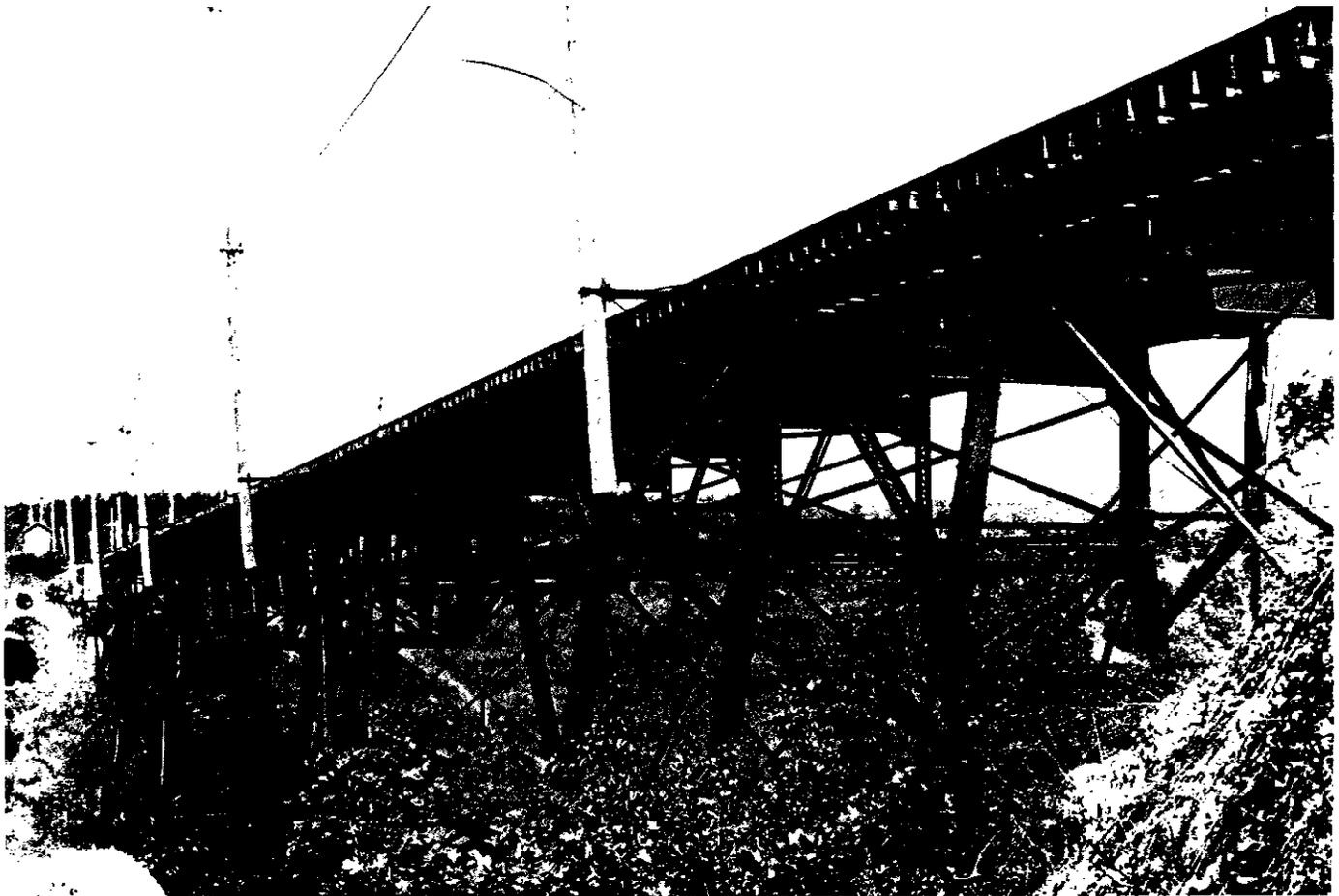
As the Bluemont Branch lazed its way into the 20th century, new and more exciting transportation developments were appearing in Washington—developments which would eventually pull the placid railroad in a surprising new direction.

The early 1900s were the time of the trolley. With the perfection of electric railway technology, cities were now able to expand far beyond the practical limits set by the speed and stamina of a horse. No longer was it necessary to live huddled together near the city's center in order to get anywhere in reasonable time and comfort, and at a bearable cost. The trolley's speed, cleanliness, service frequency, and low fares started the suburban rush which the automobile later picked up and carried to its present sprawling state. And needless to say, real estate developers quickly recognized

that tracks and overhead wires were their keys to converting woods and fields into profitable housing tracts.

Washington was no exception. During the late 1890s and early 1900s car lines spread in all directions out of the city. As already noted, an extensive system sprang up on the Virginia side of the Potomac connecting the capital with Alexandria, Mount Vernon, Arlington County points, Falls Church, and Fairfax Court House. In Maryland lines were built to Rockville via Bethesda, Laurel via Hyattsville and Riverdale, Glen Echo, Chevy Chase and Kensington, Takoma Park, and Silver Spring. Several different promoters proposed a Washington-Baltimore interurban line, which finally materialized in 1908.

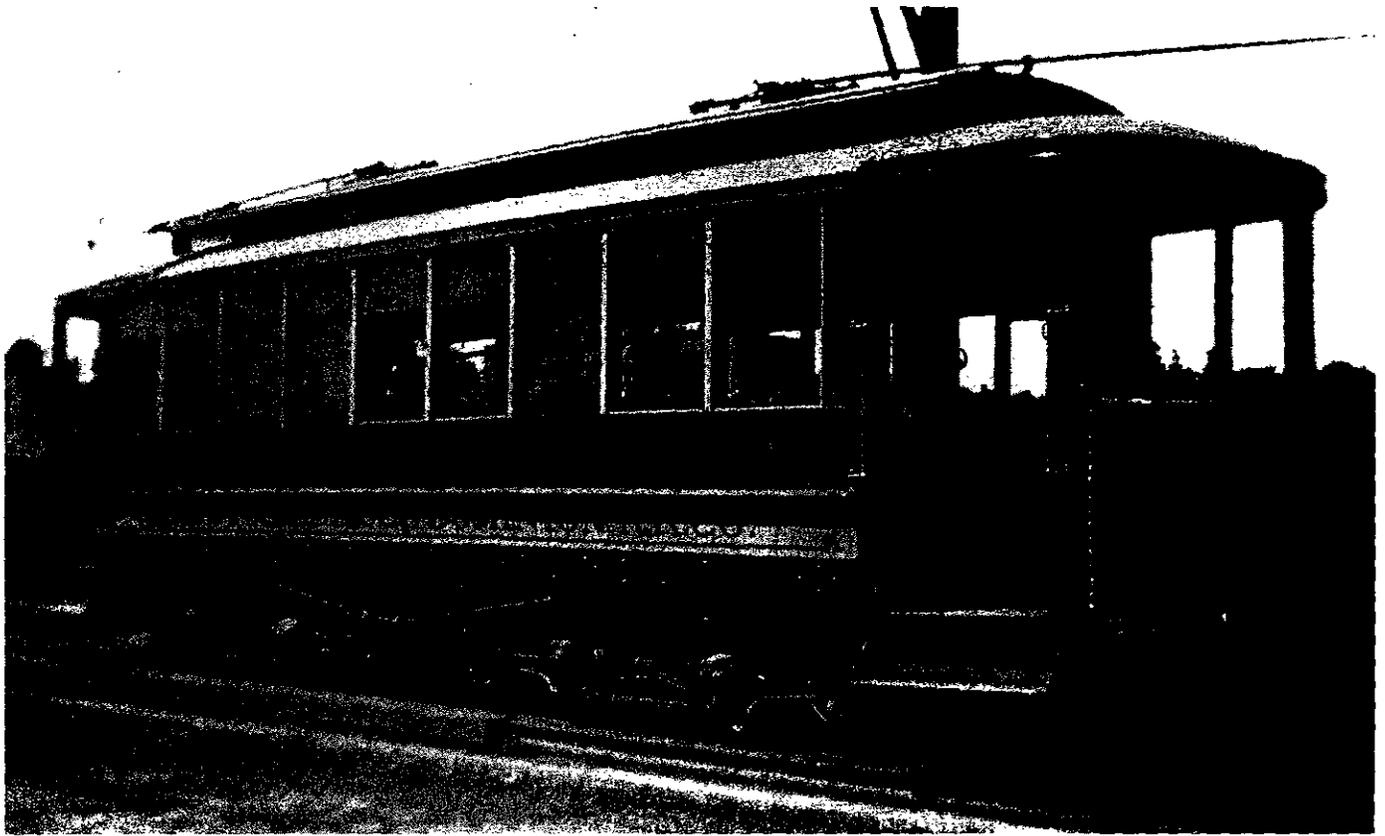
Such was the state of affairs when two more promoters came on the scene. This particular pair had



Difficult Run, near Great Falls, was the GF&OD's major topographical challenge. The line hurdled it with this combination steel trestle and truss bridge. The structure survived over 70 years, long outliving the railway.  
*(Miner Furr photo; David Marcham collection)*



Typical of the Great Falls cars was No. 7, a 1906 product of Jackson & Sharpe in Wilmington. Here it pauses at the plow pit at the Rosslyn end of the Aqueduct Bridge in 1908. *(LeRoy O. King, Sr.)*



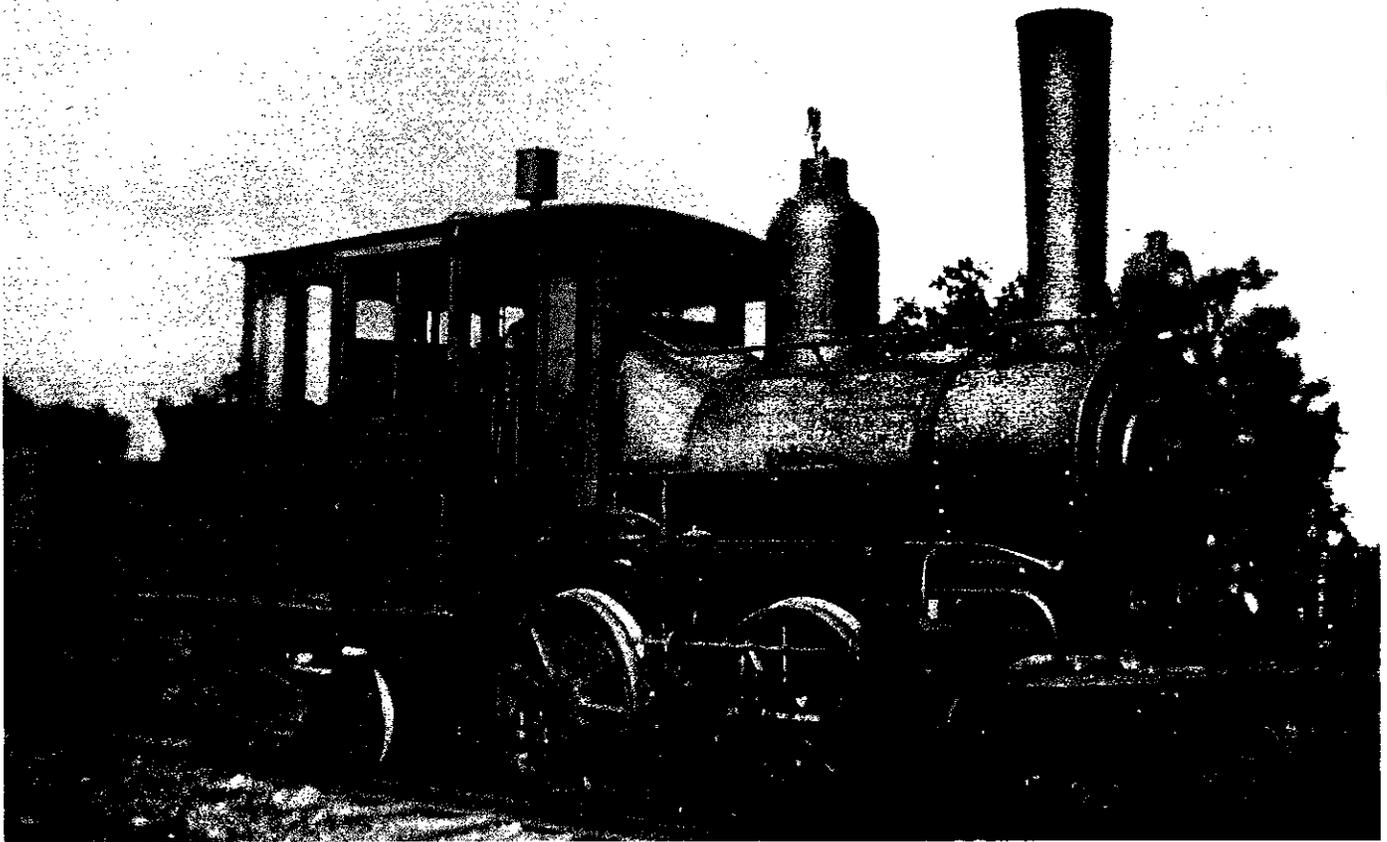
Known as the "bridge car", GF&OD No. 9 (later renumbered 10) shuttled between Georgetown and Rosslyn. A typical streetcar design of the period, it was built by Cincinnati Car Co. in 1907 and poses a year later at the Rosslyn plow pit. (LeRoy O. King, Sr.)

their eyes on the virtually virgin woodlands along the Virginia side of the Potomac to the west of Washington. They were especially entranced by a spot about ten miles west of the District Line where the usually placid river was broken up by jagged rocks into a series of spectacular cataracts—the Great Falls of the Potomac as it was called. Great Falls was indisputably one of the finest scenic attractions in the somewhat lackluster landscape around the capital and was a potentially perfect location for the one-day picnic outings so popular at the time. It had historic interest, too: carved through the rock adjacent to the Falls were the remains of the 1802 Potowmack Company canal (in which George Washington was interested) along with the ghost village of Matildaville. Adding spice for the promoters, the territory between Washington and Great Falls was largely uninhabited and a ripe for suburban development.

The word "promoters" hardly does these two justice. Both were already wealthy entrepreneurs and powerful political figures. John R. McLean, the majority partner, had what might best be called a mixed reputation. A Cincinnati native, McLean inherited

the Cincinnati *Enquirer* from his father and used it to rule the city's Democratic Party machine and enrich himself and his friends. After a popular revolt against local corruption he moved to Washington, where he bought the *Washington Post* (making it an unashamedly unrespectable newspaper), and became president of the Washington Gas Light Company and a major stockholder and director of two Washington banks. He was also a prodigious entertainer at both his downtown Washington mansion (which John Russell Pope rebuilt into an opulent Renaissance villa in 1907) and at "Friendship", his 70-acre country estate on Wisconsin Avenue. If anything, however, historians and later Washingtonians associate the McLean name with his free-spending, hard-drinking playboy son Edward "Ned" McLean and his wife, gold mining heiress Evalyn Walsh McLean, onetime owner of the Hope Diamond—surely one of the city's most famously star-crossed society couples.

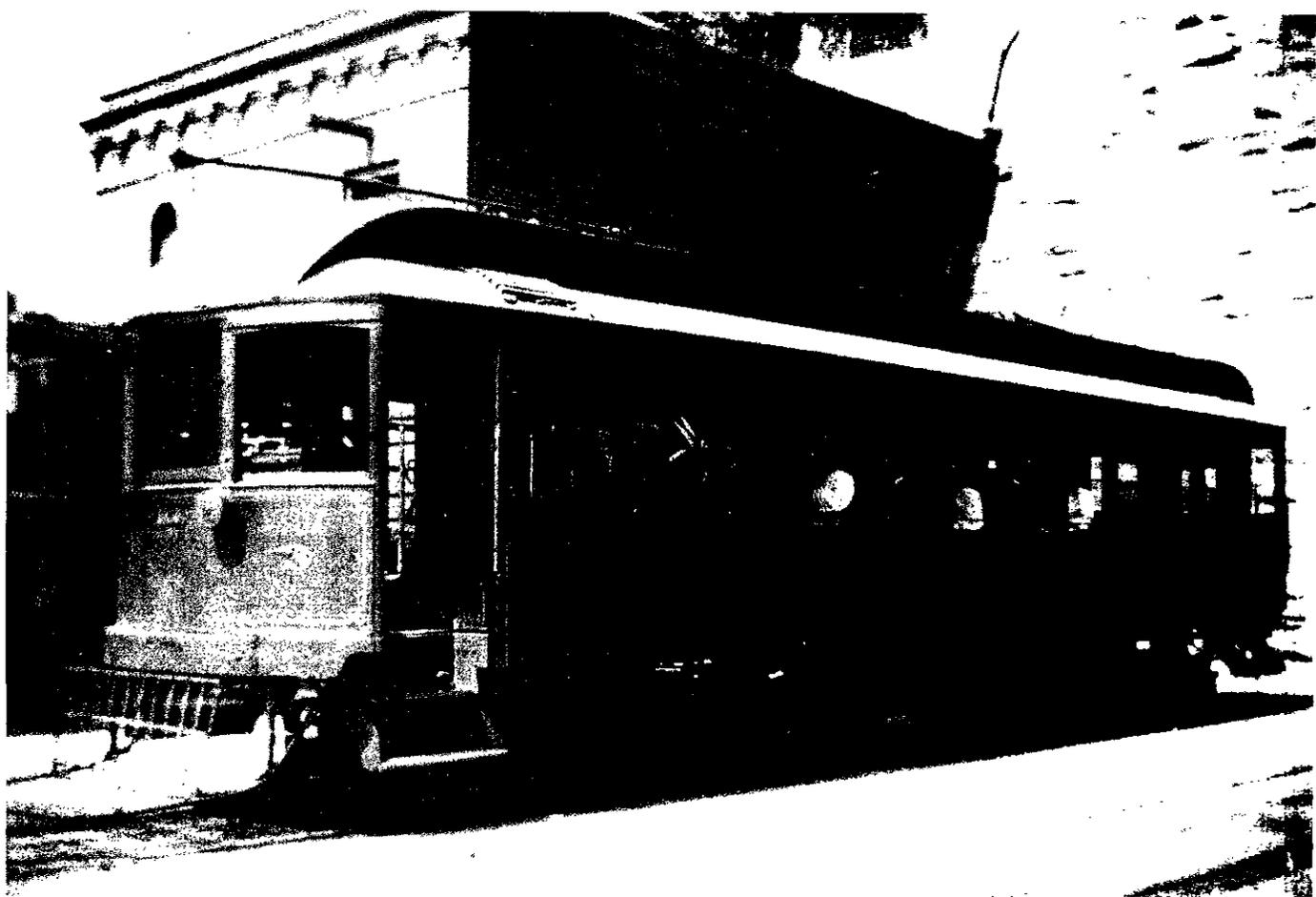
Stephen B. Elkins left a considerably more substantial legacy. Together with his father-in-law, Henry Gassaway Davis, Elkins developed immense coal mining and lumbering operations in West Virginia and built



To supplement its electric cars, the GF&OD also bought three secondhand New York elevated steamers such as the 169, an 1887 veteran displaced by electrification. (LeRoy O. King, Sr.)



Along with the elevated locomotives came six creaky wood coaches dating to 1878. No. 106 survived into the 1930s as a maintenance car. (LeRoy O. King, Sr.)



GF&OD No. 3 awaits Great Falls passengers at the Georgetown terminal in 1908. The brick building in the rear, part of the station complex, appears to have been originally a livery stable. (*LeRoy O. King, Sr.*)

the West Virginia Central & Pittsburgh Railroad to serve them. (Readers may also recall briefly meeting Elkins earlier during the travails of the Washington & Ohio). The two also founded Davis and Elkins College in West Virginia. He then entered politics in a serious way, first as Secretary of War under Benjamin Harrison and then, beginning in 1895, as U. S. Senator from West Virginia—all the while, of course, maintaining and expanding his business interests. During his Senate career Elkins authored or co-authored two keystones of interstate commerce law—the 1903 Elkins Act (which prohibited railroad rebates) and the Mann-Elkins Act of 1910 which broadened the Interstate Commerce Commission's powers.

McLean and Elkins acquired the Great Falls site and set about building an electric railway to link it and the intervening territory with Washington. Some work had already been done for them; in January of 1900 a group of local landowners had organized the Great Falls & Old Dominion Railroad and obtained a charter for the line, but aside from buying some property they accomplished

little. McLean and Elkins bought them out in March 1902 and, with little effort, raised money for immediate construction. The two promoters were essentially the railway's sole owners; McLean held 52 per cent of the stock and Elkins the remaining 48 per cent. Construction of what was planned as a 14-mile-long high-speed double-track electric line from Georgetown, in Washington, to Great Falls began in 1903.

Their most critical problem was getting across the Potomac into Washington. A bridge of their own was prohibitively costly and their most practical alternative was to use a public highway bridge. The original promoters apparently were able to negotiate an entry to Georgetown over the Federally owned Aqueduct Bridge at Rosslyn, a light iron truss structure built in 1888 on the piers of the 1843 Alexandria Canal aqueduct. It was anything but an ideal arrangement, but it had to do. Among other things the railway had to build a cantilever structure on the bridge's west side to accommodate even a single track on the narrow structure. D.C. law also prohibited trolley wires on the



The Rosslyn end of the Aqueduct Bridge was a lively spot in 1909. The camera looks toward Georgetown as the GF&OD "bridge car" at left discharges passengers for a waiting Washington, Arlington & Falls Church trolley at the right. The towered building between them is the Capital Traction Company's general office and car barn at 36th & M Streets in Georgetown—still a local landmark. (*Library of Congress*)

bridge and required the railway to build the expensive (and sometimes troublesome) underground conduit current collection system used by the city's streetcars. (The combination of a sharp "S" curve and switch at the Georgetown end of the bridge caused no end of problems with the conduit operation, and in 1913 permission was given to substitute a double overhead wire.)

Once across the bridge at Georgetown the Great Falls & Old Dominion's line immediately dead-ended on the north side of M Street at 36th. Here a station (apparently adapted from two existing brick buildings) and a pair of short open-air loading tracks snuggled against a massive retaining wall to the north. Adjacent to the east was the Capital Traction Company's big terminal, car barn and general office building, where passengers transferred to streetcars which took them downtown by way of M Street and Pennsylvania Avenue. Hardy patrons also could take a short but very steep walk up to 36th and Prospect Streets, a block north, and catch cars of the Washington Railway & Electric Company, which reached the city's center via Dupont Circle.

The nondescript and disreputable little village of Rosslyn, at the bridge's south end, was the company's key operating spot. There it built its car shop and small

yard next to what is now the Lee Highway, and a power plant on the flats alongside the river east of the bridge. Close by was the Washington, Arlington & Falls Church Railway's terminal, where three trolley routes radiated to various points in Arlington and Fairfax counties. The WA&FC, needless to say, had also coveted the Aqueduct Bridge, since its passengers either had to trudge across or take a horse omnibus to catch the Washington streetcars, but it was always frustrated by either finances or politics. As a tradeoff for its franchise, the Great Falls & Old Dominion was obligated to run a shuttle streetcar over the bridge for the Falls Church line's passengers and the locals in Rosslyn.

By the standards of early-century suburban trolley lines the Great Falls & Old Dominion was well-built and located entirely on its own private right-of-way. Once outside Rosslyn it climbed the bluffs south of the river and headed inland, roughly following the present-day Lee Highway (then merely a county road) as far as the tiny village of Cherrydale, where Shreve's store doubled as the GF&OD station. It then headed northwest to Great Falls though an area devoid of established communities. Rudimentary little three-sided shelter "stations" were put up at major country crossroads which in many cases were



Immediately south of the Aqueduct Bridge the GF&OD line swung westward. In this 1908 scene the camera looks across the trolley tracks toward Georgetown. The bridge is at the far right; behind is the Capital Traction building. Unmistakably at the left is Georgetown University and, at the river level, Henderson's Boat House. (LeRoy O. King collection)

then named for the railway's promoters or local land-owners. Ball's Hill, Hitaffer, Jewell, Vanderwerken, and Livingstone Heights were so blessed—along, of course, with McLean (at about the line's midpoint) and Elkins, near Great Falls.

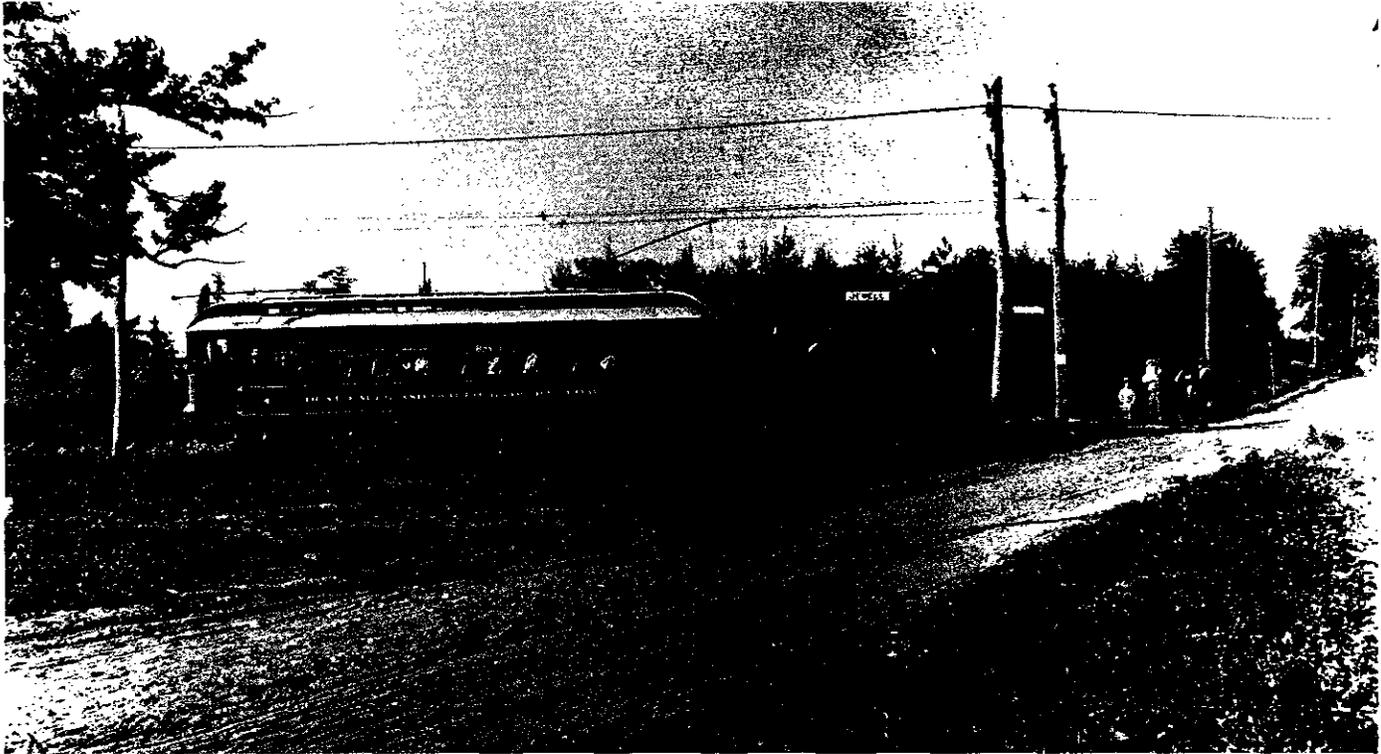
The double track line was laid with 70-pound rails; the overhead trolley wire was suspended on span wires hung from wooden lineside poles and delivered 650 volts d.c. to the cars. Since electric traction could cope with grades better than steam locomotives—and since little freight was anticipated—the GF&OD was relatively lightly graded and tended to roll with the countryside. Westbound Great Falls cars had to grind up a long three per cent grade following Spout Run out of Rosslyn, and two per cent rollercoaster hills were common. Aside from the Aqueduct Bridge, the line's only notable structure was a 600-foot-long steel trestle which carried the tracks 70 feet over the valley cut by Difficult Run, near Great Falls.

For its rolling stock, the GF&OD spread its modest favors among three different carbuilders. First came five wood-bodied interurban-style coaches and one all-pur-

pose wood baggage-express-work motor car, ordered in 1905 from the Cincinnati Car Company—likely a gesture to McLean's Cincinnati friends. The following year the Jackson & Sharpe Company of Wilmington, Delaware built two similar interurban coaches and the Southern Car Company at High Point, N. C. supplied a single interurban passenger-baggage combine and a double-truck city streetcar for the Aqueduct Bridge shuttle service.

The company also bought a dinky ex-elevated railroad steam locomotive and two wooden open-platform coaches from New York's Manhattan Railway, made surplus by the electrification of the "el" lines. It planned to use the two-car steam train for peak weekend loads and the engine itself for freight and work trains during the week.

By the summer season of 1906 the railway was ready to run, albeit only a single track was initially put down. Service of a sort began March 7th of that year but could be operated only as far as Difficult Run, just east of Elkins station, where the trestle was still abuilding. The trolleys made it to Great Falls just in time for the rush—on July 3rd the first scheduled car ran to the loop terminal



Car 4 has dropped what appears to be a pioneering suburban family at Jewell station, just east of Vanderwerken in western Arlington County. The rudimentary shelter was typical of GF&OD way stations.  
*(Harpers Ferry National Park, Fishbaugh collection)*



Out on the Great Falls line, car No. 8 heads west at Pimmit's Run, near McLean, about 1908.  
*(Miner Furr photo; David Marcham collection)*



Car No. 3 has turned on the loop at Great Falls and awaits returning passengers at the almost-new terminal station in 1908. (Miner Furr photo; David Marcham collection)

at Great Falls, where the promoters had built a dance pavilion, merry-go-round, and picnic tables overlooking the turbulent waters. On Independence Day the bands, crowds, and cars were in full swing.

Success was instant and overwhelming. Crowds flocking to Great Falls Park swamped the eight-car roster, and the company promptly scurried back to the Manhattan Railway for two more steam engines and four wooden coaches identical to the old elevated equipment it already had. Thus by the year's end three tiny teakettles and six ancient and weary 1878 wooden coaches were on the property to supplement the overloaded trolleys and the straining electrical system. Observant onlookers must have boggled at these bizarre little trains—for one of the two coaches trailing behind the chuffing 0-4-4 Forney steamer was equipped with trolley poles for train lighting, making it look as if the whole affair was trying to use every form of power it could to keep moving. By 1907 the GF&OD was carrying 1.6 million passengers a year, with the number steadily growing. Full double tracking was finally completed in 1908.

The crossroads stations began to grow into communities too. By 1911 McLean was large enough to warrant its own post office, with mail brought in on the Old Dominion's combine. (The same car also carried mail to Cherrydale.) A string of little settlements sprang up between McLean and Rosslyn and the railway acquired increasing numbers of the most volatile commodity known to transportation—commuters. More cars were badly needed, and in 1911 the company bought four more interurban coaches. To make the roster even more diverse, these came from yet a fourth builder, the Jewett Car Company of Newark, Ohio. Unlike the line's earlier equipment, which operated only as single units, they were equipped with multiple-unit control and could be run in trains. This group of cars seemed jinxed from the start, however; on their first day in operation two of them hit each other head-on, completely demolishing one and badly damaging the other. The demolished car, by the way, carried the number 13.

It may have been an omen, but if so McLean and Elkins ignored it. By then they were expanding in another and quite different direction—the Bluemont Branch.



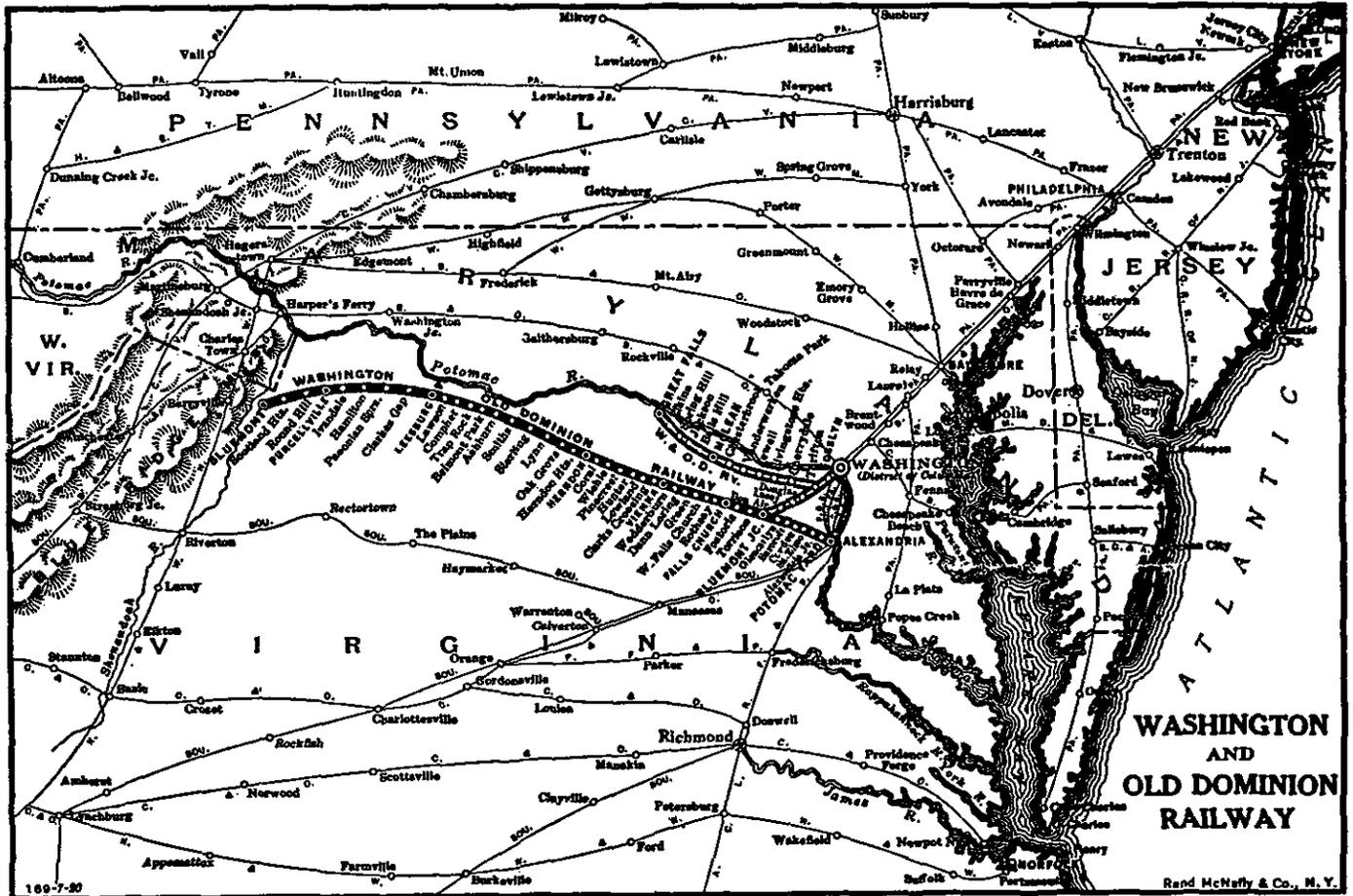
Powered by one of the pygmy ex-elevated steamers, an equally diminutive GF&OD freight pauses at Cherrydale about 1908. Robert Shreve & Son's general store, which doubled as the trolley station, stands in the rear. (*J. F. Burns collection*)



On the eve of its metamorphosis into the Washington & Old Dominion, the GF&OD bought four multiple-unit Jewett coaches in 1911. Two were subsequently wrecked. One of the survivors, No. 12, still worked Great Falls runs when this photo was made at Rosslyn in 1933. (*R. A. Perkin*)

# TRANSFORMATION

1911 - 1912



The Great Falls & Old Dominion's bustle was quickly reflected in its finances. Gross income rose about 30 per cent between 1907 and 1910 while net profits soared 400 per cent in the same period. (To be sure, the amounts involved were relatively modest—from a gross of \$102,000 in 1910, the railway returned a total of \$15,500 to its two owners—and it is doubtful whether such items as depreciation were included in the expenses.)

And as their Great Falls operation prospered, a warm and expansive glow overcame McLean and Elkins. Apparently enraptured by the prospects of a

larger electric railway system, they looked for new directions within the territory to push the GF&OD. Their candidate turned out to be the Southern Railway's Bluemont Branch.

What prompted this decision is now unknown. Speculatively, it is possible that executives of the Southern (which was headquartered in Washington) suggested the idea. Leasing or selling the branch would relieve the big system of a marginal appendage while still retaining its freight interchange traffic. Whatever the circumstances, some time in 1910 McLean and



First order of business for the new Washington & Old Dominion was construction of a 3-mile double-track connecting line between the GF&OD at Thrifton (at present Lee Highway and I-66) and the steam railroad branch at Bluemont Junction. In this 1937 scene a short freight is approaching the typically minimalistic Garrison "station" at Wilson Boulevard, near Ballston. (W&OD photo; Harwood collection)

Elkins began planning to lease the 54-mile steam railroad, electrify it, and connect it with their Great Falls line. (While the two lines more or less paralleled each other, they did not meet at any point and were three miles apart at their closest.)

But on the surface the idea seemed odd. The bucolic steam railroad, hauling freight and local passenger trains through farming and resort country, had almost nothing in common with a suburban trolley line. Traffic, equipment, and operating techniques were all different and in some cases incompatible. And in retrospect, the handwriting already was appearing on the wall for electric interurban railway projects. Nationally the interurban industry's financial record had been notably uninspiring and investors were becoming wary; by 1911 very few such projects were being built new. By that date too, Henry Ford's Model T had been in production for three years and its implications were becoming clear to at least some perceptive transportation people.

On the positive side, though, the growth of the Great Falls business had been heady, and perhaps the promoters saw the same potential in Bluemont Branch territory, given faster, more frequent electric train service. After all, communities east of the

railroad's Herndon station were well within reasonable commuting range and ripe for greater development. (Already, of course, part of this territory was tapped by suburban car lines.) And although the clientele and characteristics of the Blue Ridge summer traffic were mostly different from Great Falls, it seemed equally promising. There also seemed to be economic advantages. By leasing an existing railroad line, capital costs for property acquisition and construction would be very low. In theory too, an electric line would be cheaper to operate than steam, and furthermore an independent company using non-union employees could pay lower wage rates with less work-rule restrictions than the steam railroad. (This last factor may have motivated the Southern to encourage the deal.)

Whatever their reasoning, they moved ahead. A new company would be created to absorb the existing Great Falls & Old Dominion property, build a three-mile double-track line in Alexandria (now Arlington) County connecting the two, and reroute Bluemont Branch passenger services to GF&OD's Georgetown terminal via Rosslyn. Under the planned lease the Southern would continue owning the line and all its existing structures while McLean and Elkins would



The Southern's Bluemont Branch was electrified using catenary wire suspended from bracket arms on high wooden poles. This early view looks west at Round Hill; the onetime Southern passenger station is at the left with a new electric substation immediately behind it. At the right is the board-and-batten freight house. Both buildings stood in 2000. (LeRoy O. King collection)

install and own the electrical system, provide all the motive power and cars, and operate it for themselves.

Things got off to a ominous start. Before anything formal was accomplished, the project lost one of its principals. On January 4, 1911 the 69-year-old Elkins died in Washington after returning home from a holiday trip to his West Virginia home. Since his will forbade selling his GF&OD stock, his heirs—principally his 35-year-old son Davis Elkins—inherited responsibility for his part of the project and, like it or not, joined with McLean to make it a reality.

On May 12, 1911 they organized the Washington & Old Dominion Railway as the Great Falls & Old

Dominion's corporate successor. The new company would own the former GF&OD property as well as the planned connecting line to the Bluemont Branch and all electrical equipment and rolling stock to be used on the leased Bluemont Branch. Like the GF&OD before, the Washington & Old Dominion was wholly owned by the two family groups, who not only held all its securities but were personally responsible for its debts—a situation somewhat unusual in railroad finance and one that was almost guaranteed to cause future trouble.

Also that year they concluded negotiations with the Southern for the Bluemont Branch lease. The contract—



Six electric multiple-unit coaches arrived in 1912 to handle the bulk of Bluemont Division passenger traffic. Two of them, Nos. 73 and 75, lay over at Bluemont in 1936, watched over by the landmark grain elevator in the rear. (Wm. Lichtenstern)

which ran for 50 years and called for rentals beginning at \$45,000 a year and gradually increasing to \$60,000—probably looked reasonable to the optimistic promoters but in hindsight turned out to be too stiff to support. The Southern also excluded the easternmost mile of the branch, from the east end of the Potomac Yard trestle to the old AL&H Fairfax Street terminal in Alexandria, which it kept to reach various freight customers and to provide an alternate route to Potomac Yard if needed.

Under its lease terms the Washington & Old Dominion would take over all Bluemont Branch service on July 1, 1912, ready or not. It had less than a year to do so. Contracts went to Westinghouse for electric distribution equipment and to the Southern Car Company for rolling stock, while engineers and construction contractors scurried to make things ready. Electric wires were strung over the tracks as Southern steam trains went about their regular business underneath. Dirt flew on the new three-mile connecting line, which left the Great Falls & Old Dominion line at its Thrifton station, about half a mile east of Cherrydale, and joined the steam railroad at a then-remote spot in Alexandria (Arlington) County christened, inevitably, Bluemont Junction. The junction, to be one of the

W&OD's key operating points, lay in the woodsy Four Mile Run valley just east of the Bluemont Branch's crossing of the present Wilson Boulevard, (At that time the road crossing was marked by a flag stop called Torreyson, later spelled Torrison.)

The property which took shape in 1912 was Virginia's largest interurban system, 72 route miles altogether, 17 miles of which were double-track. It also had the ambiguous honor of being one of the country's last major interurban projects. But did did have some breeding—with the acquisition of the Bluemont Branch it could trace its lineage back to 1847, something few members of the *nouveau* interurban industry could do.

#### **W. & O. D. Plant and Equipment**

As can be readily deduced from earlier descriptions, the new W&OD was a combination of two disparate types of railway which had not much more than their track gauge in common. Not surprisingly it was operated and marketed as two divisions, each with its own timetables and equipment. And while the company adopted relatively high standards for its electrical equipment and new rolling stock, it was determinedly frugal in all other ways, making full use



All-purpose workhorses of the new electric line were four combines like No. 43, shown soaking up a wintry morning sun in Rosslyn in 1936. (*Wm. Lichtenstern*)

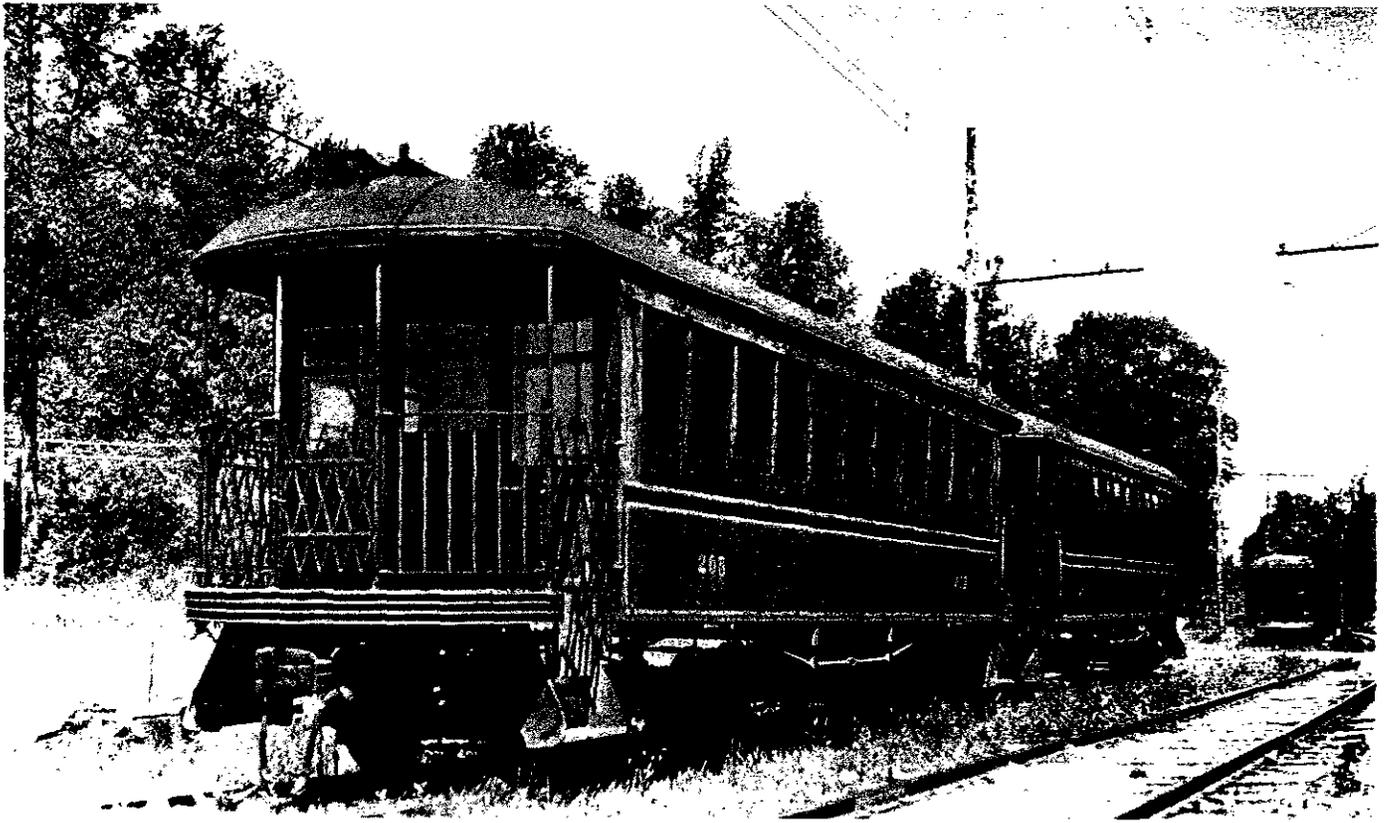
of all the existing physical facilities on both lines and adding little new. As a result, the two divisions lived their lives looking as they had before the consolidation.

The Bluemont Division formed the main line, of course, running 52.1 miles from Georgetown to Bluemont via Rosslyn, Bluemont Junction, and Leesburg. As such it combined the eastern end of the GF&OD, the new Thrifton-Bluemont Junction connecting line, and the old steam railroad. At Bluemont Junction it met the original route east to Alexandria, now a 7.6-mile-long secondary branch used primarily to carry freight to and from the railroad interchanges at Potomac Yard and Alexandria. (As noted earlier, the W&OD's leased property ended just east of the Potomac Yard trestle on Alexandria's north side; under a traffic agreement, Southern switchers handled W&OD passenger and freight cars from there to the old AL&H Alexandria depots.)

To outfit this division the company ordered a matched set of 16 interurban passenger cars—six

coaches, four passenger-baggage combines, and six open-end trailer coaches without electric motors—plus two baggage-express motors. (In the jargon of the trade, the terms “express motor” and “freight motor” usually meant an electrically powered baggage car or electric locomotive.)

These Southern Car Company products were designed for cross-country train operation and differed substantially from the earlier GF&OD equipment. All were equipped with multiple-unit control and could run together in varying combinations depending on traffic loads. The electric coaches and combines came complete with train doors, two toilets, leather seats, and were painted a dark green with gold striping. These ten utilitarian but handsome cars were meant to be the backbone of Bluemont service, and that they were for the life of the electric operation. Their specifications reflected economy of operation and the demands of an essentially stop-and-go local service. At 28 tons the steel-sheathed wood-bodied cars were



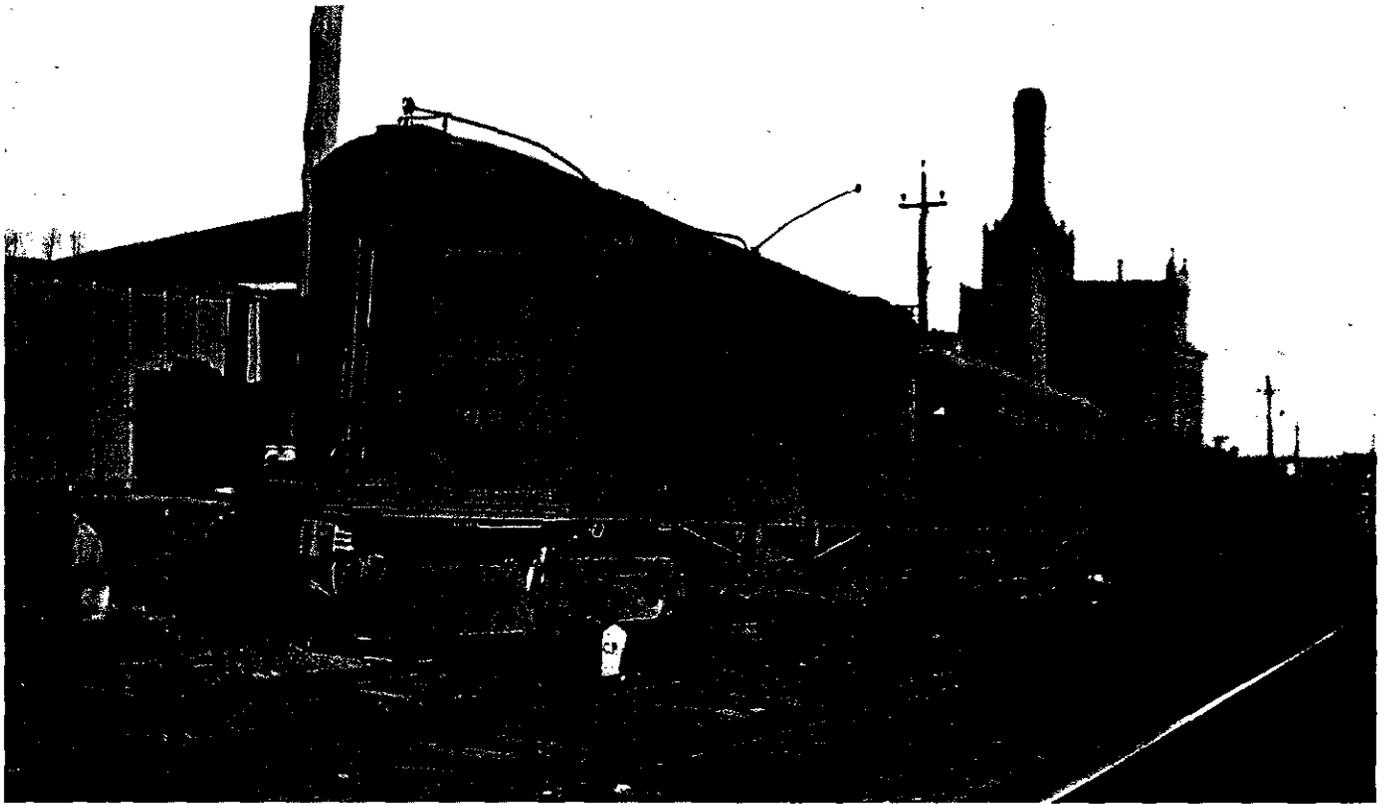
Six lightweight open-end trailer coaches were also bought in 1912 as an economical method of handling peak traffic. As such, they were largely surplus by the late 1920s and were retired in the early Depression years. A pair awaits scrapping at Torrison siding, just west of Bluemont Junction, in 1936. (B. D. Fales)

quite light by interurban standards of the time—probably in deference to the Aqueduct Bridge structure—and their four 60 hp motors provided adequate power but not blistering speeds. (In contrast their slightly lighter GF&OD predecessors had four 75 hp motors.) Two of the four combines had provision for working mail as well as baggage and express shipments, and all were geared for hauling passenger trailers, milk cars, or whatever else the company felt like tying on. The six trailer coaches—meant mostly for use in peak periods—were somewhat more Spartan, with rattan seats and only one toilet.

To save time and money, the company initially elected to leave the carload freight trains in the hands of steam power a while longer. As a result, the seven-mile branch between Bluemont Junction and Alexandria was left unelectrified, and in addition to its electric passenger and express equipment the W&OD ordered two low-slung Consolidation (2-8-0) steamers from the Baldwin Locomotive Works. Essentially similar to the light Consolidations the Southern had assigned

to the line, they handled Bluemont Division freight trains and the Alexandria-Bluemont Junction passenger shuttles, plus odd jobs such as hauling work trains and rescuing disabled electric cars. Little is now known about their operation, but since the W&OD had no steam servicing and repair facilities of its own, it is probable that the two engines were maintained at the Southern's Alexandria roundhouse and perhaps based at the old AL&H Fairfax Street terminal.

Since the GF&OD's equipment operated on 650 volts direct current, the W&OD adopted this as its traction current, although by then 1200 volts d.c. was standard on newer long-distance operations such as the nearby Washington, Baltimore & Annapolis. Unlike the GF&OD, however, the new company used a catenary overhead wire system rather than direct suspension. Brick substations adjacent to the stations at Bluemont Junction, Herndon, Leesburg, and Round Hill converted 33,000 volts alternating current from transmission lines to the 650 volts d.c. used by the cars. To handle the extra electrical loads during peak



Ugly duckling No. 300 was one of two express motors built for the Bluemont Division in 1912. Designed to carry freight, express, and milk, they could pull trailers (like the one shown behind) and also ran in trains with the new coaches and combines. The scene is at the Rosslyn freight station about 1920. (*W&OD photo; Harwood collection*)

times, the company also bought a portable substation which it could move to points on either division as needed. For the first five years of its life the W&OD generated its own power at the the GF&OD Rosslyn powerhouse, but like most such operations it switched to more efficient commercial power in 1917.

But aside from its new electrical fixtures, the Bluemont Division looked little different from its Southern Railway days. It was every inch a typical early-century steam branch line, with 56- and 60-pound rails (most of it laid in the mid-1880s), light iron bridges, and wooden trestles. The same frame stations, painted standard Southern colors and with their traditional semaphore-type train order boards, served the passenger and freight customers, and operations on the unsignaled line followed traditional railroad manual block procedures.

The Great Falls Division left this main line at Thrifton station, two miles from Georgetown, and followed the GF&OD route 12 miles to Great Falls. Like the Bluemont line, it was left in its original physical state, with its rudimentary shelter stations (some of

them built by landowners or real estate developers), span-wire overhead suspension, and lack of signaling. Service was handled by the old GF&OD roster of suburban-type cars, which by that time consisted of ten electric coaches (including the three surviving multiple-unit 1911 Jewett cars), one combine, its double-truck "bridge" streetcar, and one baggage-express motor. Also included was a single-truck 1892 streetcar bought secondhand from the Washington Railway & Electric Company in 1909 to supplement its own "bridge" car. On the property at the time the W&OD was created, but of uncertain usefulness, were the three onetime elevated steamers and several of the "el" coaches, at least two of which had been converted for work and freight chores and one to an unsuccessful electric car. (The sturdy little Forney steamers were resold in 1913 and went on to new lives with southern lumbering operations.)

For all practical purposes the Bluemont and Great Falls division car rosters remained separate, although cars could run on either line and sometimes did. Most commonly, the GF&OD cars showed up on the



This portable electric substation was also acquired in 1912 to boost power on either division during peak demand times. Retired, it here awaits scrapping at Bluemont Junction in 1946. (*H. H. Harwood, Jr.*)

Bluemont Division short turns between Georgetown and Bluemont Junction and later on the Bluemont Junction-Alexandria shuttles; Bluemont interurban coaches occasionally strayed to Great Falls on special runs and baggage-express motors were moved around as needed.

The former GF&OD Georgetown terminal and nearly adjacent Rosslyn shop, yard, and powerhouse became the Washington & Old Dominion system's operational center—and also its worst bottleneck as will be seen soon. The principal improvements made by the W&OD were a metal trainshed at the Georgetown terminal to shelter the two-track loading

area (which was originally open to the elements) and a new wood freight house at Rosslyn.

#### **The W. & O. D. Begins Life**

From the beginning, things started going amiss. The Southern lease specified a July 1, 1912 takeover date, which inevitably arrived—but the W&OD's new electric cars had not and, in fact, the electrification work itself was not finished. Nevertheless the company lurched off, using anything at hand. For the first month or so, Bluemont service was pretty much the same as it had been before, only more confused. As a stopgap, rented Southern locomotives and passenger cars continued running on the old timetable; former



For the W&OD's first 8 years steam power like this shared the tracks with electric cars. The W&OD bought two light 2-8-0s from Baldwin in 1912 for freight and miscellaneous work. Replaced by home-built electric freight motors by 1919, they were resold to the South Georgia Railroad. (*Baldwin Locomotive Works*)

GF&OD trolleys shuttled between the Georgetown terminal and Bluemont Junction, where passengers transferred to the steam trains. As the new interurban cars filtered in, they gradually replaced the rented railroad cars but were still hauled behind steam over most of the trip to Bluemont. By October 6th the electric cars could run as far as Leesburg, and in the closing days of the year the power was switched on all the way to Bluemont.

Once it had untangled itself, the Washington & Old Dominion set up optimistic Bluemont Division schedules which almost tripled the old Southern steam service. A total of 14 passenger trains ran each way over the route—four Washington-Herndon round trips, five to Leesburg, and five to the end of the line at Bluemont. In addition, 12 local runs filled in over the five miles between Washington and Bluemont Junction, and six steam-hauled shuttles chugged each way through the winding Four Mile Run valley between the old Fairfax Street station in Alexandria and Bluemont Junction.

But by the end of 1913 this first flush of enthusiasm had worn off and Bluemont Division service was trimmed back to ten trains each way. The Herndon trips disappeared, and four trains now ran to Leesburg and six to Bluemont. The 12 Georgetown-Bluemont

Junction locals remained, but one train was cut from the Alexandria service. The Washington-Bluemont trains consisted of anywhere from one to four cars and managed a 20 mph average speed between terminals. The full 52-mile Washington-Bluemont trip took anywhere from two to two and a half hours depending on the particular train—not notably different from the old steam running times.

Freight service was more minimal, of course, but considerably greater than the average interurban line. Two crews a day were usually enough to handle the carload and less-than-carload traffic in the earlier years. Usually one of the Baldwin Consolidations was dispatched from a small terminal at Alexandria Junction (west of the Potomac Yard trestle) and picked up and set off cars at sidings and stations on the line to Bluemont; at the same time an electric baggage-express motor ran from Rosslyn in an erratic circuit along the Great Falls and Bluemont line as needed. Standard railroad carload freight operations were extended from Bluemont Junction to Rosslyn, but the Great Falls Division remained largely limited to passengers, mail, and package express shipments.

Occupying a nether-land between freight and passenger service was the daily milk run, a tradition dating from the Washington, Ohio & Western days.



At busy Bluemont Junction the new connecting line from Georgetown and Rosslyn joined the old steam road from Alexandria to Bluemont. Trains from three directions met here, passengers transferred, and freight was switched between the Alexandria-Potomac Yard branch and points on the Rosslyn line. This 1940 view looks west along the former steam line as combine No. 41 heads for Rosslyn while interurban coach 76 waits to proceed west. (R. S. Crockett)

Loudoun County was one of the capital's major milk suppliers and the railroad moved the perishable product on a tight schedule to get it to market in the morning. Usually consisting of an express motor, a passenger combine, and an old wooden baggage car or boxcar, this train left Bluemont at dawn to pick up loaded milk cans at each station, road crossing, and cowpath along the way. Early in the evening it returned the empties for the next day's business.

As might be expected, Great Falls Division service was more sensitive to the fluctuating demands of the excursion and commuter businesses, and schedules gyrated much more widely and wildly than on the sedate Bluemont line. During the winter months, for example, about 44 round trips ran each weekday—four as far as Cherrydale, five to Vanderwerken, ten to McLean, and 25 to Great Falls. Extras appeared on Saturday nights for theatergoers and miscellaneous roisterers. Summers, especially July and August, were another story. Official timetables showed 56 trains each

way, with 40 running through to Great Falls and a ten-minute frequency as far as Cherrydale.

But in the Old Dominion's case, published timetables never told the full story. The company developed a quaint habit of changing things on the spur of the moment, and many trains were noted in early timetables as "...not guaranteed in any case, and the service is advertised with the distinct understanding that such trains will be operated only when practicable." Commuters were warned that "any rush hour car or train scheduled herein which proves unnecessary to accommodate the travel may be varied or discontinued without notice." On the other hand, several regular runs operated on both divisions which never appeared in a public timetable. Weekends and special events also brought out unadvertised extras, and published schedules sometimes went out the window in the frenzy of moving people with limited equipment and crews.

Thus the new Washington & Old Dominion presented as peculiar an interurban operation as could be

seen anywhere. In its early years one could see steam and electric rolling stock of all descriptions dodging one another. And embraced within the systems's 72 miles were both extremes of railroading. The one and a half miles of double track between Rosslyn and the Thrifton junction must surely have been one of the country's hottest stretches of line, with over 150 week-day scheduled trains; on the other hand the heavily wooded Alexandria branch echoed with steam whistles from the once-a-day wayfreight and infrequent single-car passenger trains. Steam locomotives took water from tanks standing alongside the electric wires at Vienna, Leesburg, and Bluemont; wye tracks for turning them were located at Bluemont Junction, Herndon, Leesburg, and Bluemont.

During these early years the Old Dominion's greatest passenger asset was unquestionably Great Falls, and the railway did its best to be sure that no Washingtonian was unaware of its charms. Some anonymous early-century flack produced the following ecstatic eulogy for a 1913 timetable, and although the superlatives flow faster than the falls themselves, the piece nicely preserves the flavor of the park, the railway, and the era before autos, movies, and television:

"GREAT FALLS OF THE POTOMAC, the Niagara of the South, great by nature and historical connection, while not equalling Niagara in magnitude, surpasses it in beauty. Visitors traveling in the excellent cars of the Washington & Old Dominion Railway hear the roar and rumble of the Falls long before they are reached. On arriving at the station they pass through a magnificent grove of forest trees and emerge on a high platform built below the Falls;

where suddely the grandest view imagination can picture is spread out before their vision. They first behold the rapids where the water tosses and tumbles over mammoth boulders and jagged rocks, which from their enormous size at different places, change the course of the water, causing it to run in zig-zag courses which increases its wildness and fury, and seems to be dashing in every direction. It then rushes over sheer precipices, forming three waterfalls of majestic beauty...thence passing down a narrow gorge with perpendicular walls of granite, for about one mile, where it spreads out into one vast, placid expanse. On the other side of the river, there is a low mountain range studded with gigantic forest trees. The entire scene presents a panoramic view of wild and rugged nature unsurpassed by any on earth, and it is utterly impossible to adequately describe the beauty and grandeur of that scene.

In Spring, Summer, and Autumn there are band concerts and various amusements. The finest meals are served at the Inn located in the park.

Great Falls presents from a hundred different views a new surprise of enchanting scenery that makes the hours spent in its vicinity pass all too rapidly."

The falls were indeed beautiful and in fact the scene is just as spectacular today. The newly developing suburban communities along the line were also pleasant. But getting back and forth was sometimes rugged. As the Old Dominion started life it became a scramble to get organized and do things right.

**ATTENTION!**

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**MASS MEETING**

**Of the Citizens' Association and citizens on  
the line of the Old Dominion Railroad  
Old Devil Railroad**

**Monday, May 11th,  
At 8 P. M. Sharp**

**Union Church**

**Interdenominational**

**Business of Importance and Selection of  
A Delegate to Appear Before the  
Corporation Commission May 20th.**

**Come One**

**Come All**

**L. S. Polkinhorn, Printer, 616 La. Ave.**

Unhappily symbolic of the W&OD's first years of life, this undated call to arms was probably issued about 1918 by irate Great Falls Division commuters. (*Harwood collection*)

# THE TURBULENT TEENS

1913 - 1919



This impressive wooden trestle was just east of the Round Hill station. A mixed three-car train consisting of an express motor, electric combine, and trailer coach heads west some time before 1920. (*Town of Round Hill*)

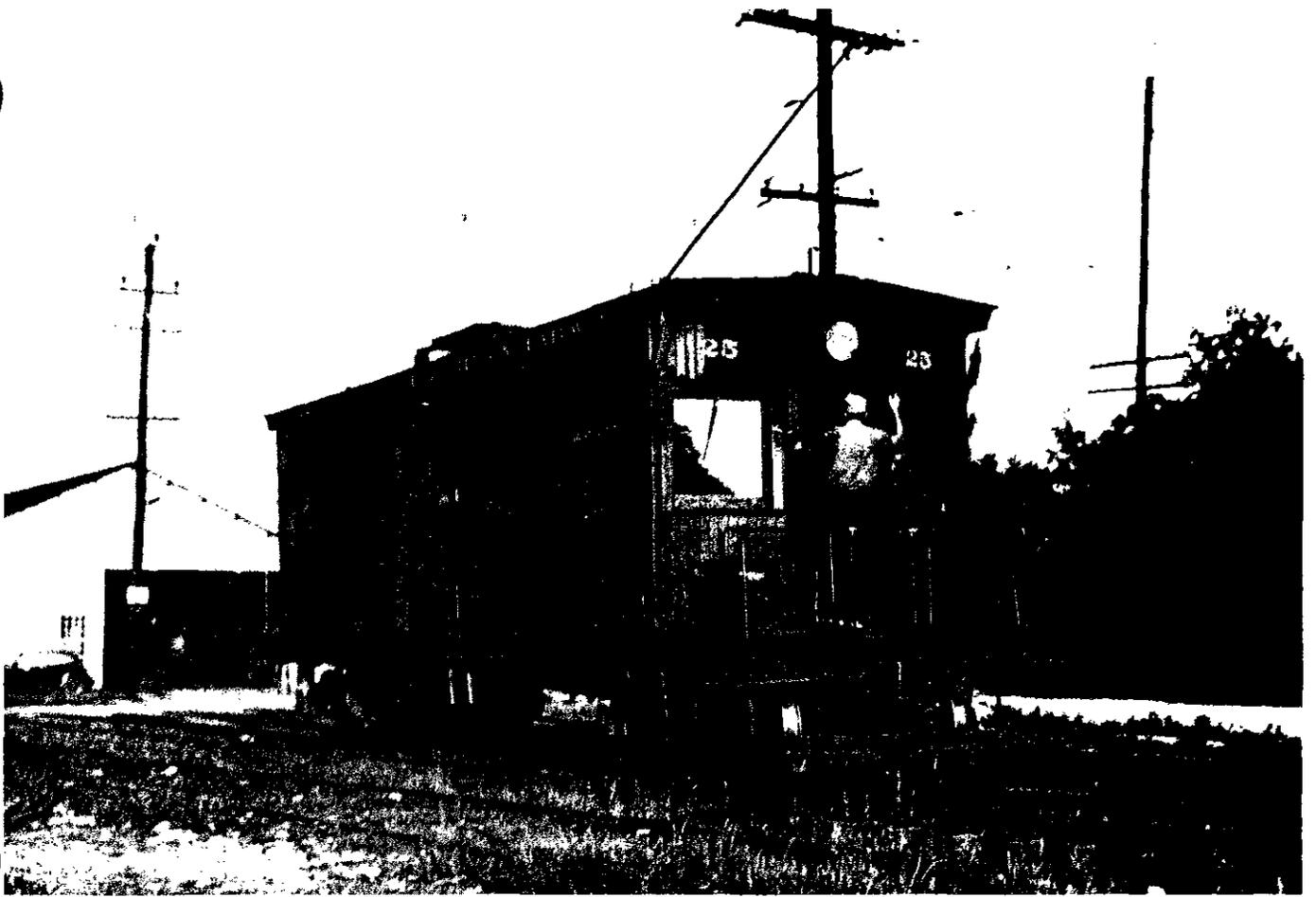
John R. McLean's magic business touch got him nowhere with the Washington & Old Dominion. In its first full year of operation the company lost over \$107,000 and followed this up in 1914 with an even larger deficit. Paradoxically, business was fine—too good, in fact. Soon the rigors of running a railway with too much traffic but too little investment money or management oversight showed everywhere. As a result, colorful chaos characterized the Old Dominion's first decade.

The physical plant was one problem. By 1913 the Great Falls Division was truly staggering under its growing load of commuters and parkgoers. Yet there had been few improvements since the Great Falls &

Old Dominion opened in 1906. Despite its traffic volume the line had never been signaled, which inhibited train operations, nor was there enough equipment capacity. For Great Falls service the company relied on the original GF&OD fleet, augmented only by the three surviving 1911 Jewett cars. They were relatively small and, except for the Jewetts, could not operate in trains. The line was also too hilly to haul trailer coaches, a technique used by many electric lines in peak periods.

Aggravating the rolling stock problem on both divisions was the capacity of the system's only repair shop at Rosslyn. Designed for the GF&OD's original ten-car fleet and essentially unchanged after the





Home-built wood freight motor 25 clearly shows its boxcar ancestry in this view at Rosslyn in 1938. In addition to hauling freight trains it doubled as a line car for overhead wire maintenance. It proved to be a sturdy survivor, moving to Maryland's Hagerstown & Frederick Ry. after the W&OD took down its wires and operating there until 1955. (G. F. Cunningham)

consolidation, it was now struggling to keep 32 assorted cars and express motors in running condition and often not succeeding.

But the system's worst physical nightmare was the Georgetown terminal and its access—now handling about 150 scheduled weekday trains plus the shuttle “bridge” cars to Rosslyn. Squeezed between the street and a high stone retaining wall at 36th and M Streets, its layout was restricted to only two short stub tracks, giving it a practical capacity of two cars with no place to expand. That in itself demanded a tightly disciplined operation to keep the terminal fluid by loading and unloading quickly and moving empty equipment over the Aqueduct Bridge between the terminal and the small Rosslyn storage yard.

All of which was not easy. Between Georgetown and Rosslyn cars had to creep one-third of a mile across the narrow and congested bridge on a single track. Only single cars could be run over the bridge and,

under a District of Columbia ordinance, had to be spaced at least 300 feet apart. (The city was justly nervous about the consequences of a mid-bridge collision on the narrow structure.) Multi-car Bluemont Division trains had to be assembled or uncoupled at the Rosslyn yard, adding more delays.

Compounding the confusion was a remarkably loose-jointed and casual operating organization. In 1914, for example, one company official was obliged to complain in a memo to the general manager that:

“...a great many employees of this road, who are not competent to operate cars and have never been instructed in this matter are frequently seen running cars, apparently for the fun of it. If it is desired to bring a sense of responsibility among the regular motormen it will be necessary to stop this playing with equipment by irresponsible men who are not amenable to discipline and are not criticized for failure to conform to the rules of

operation... The fact that these men are not in uniform gives passengers the impression that we allow any friend of the motorman to run the cars while he takes a rest."

And the trainmen themselves were sometimes equally slack. The makeup of train crews tended toward happy-go-lucky youths plus a few itinerant railroaders with a penchant for strong spirits. One rider recalled that exuberant young motormen would sometimes pass up waiting passengers because "they had a good speed up and just didn't want to slow down."

This predilection for do-as-you-please operations was especially hard on the already overtaxed rolling stock. Collisions seemed to be a constant fact of life, and almost every car on the roster suffered in some kind of smashup or another. At one point as many as eight damaged cars were accumulated at the struggling Rosslyn shop awaiting repair, materially adding to the scheduling woes.

The demise of car No. 8 was an all too typical example. Early one Fall morning in 1912, cars Nos. 8 and 15 were dispatched from overnight storage at Rosslyn to pick up inbound commuters on the Great Falls line. Car 15—one of the ill-starred 1911 Jewetts—was scheduled to leave first and run to McLean, where it would turn back. With No. 15 safely ahead, No. 8 was then to follow as far as the Vanderwerken crossover, four miles outside Rosslyn, where it would reverse and return to Georgetown with commuters from Cherrydale and other inner suburbs. But No. 8's crew unaccountably decided to leave first, humming out of Rosslyn ahead of the 15. Apparently in a sporting mood, No. 15's crew sped out behind. Reaching Vanderwerken, No. 8 stopped to change direction and operate the crossover switches—and No. 15 caught up. Careening down a long grade and unable to stop on the damp, slippery rail it met No. 8 head-on with a resounding crunch. No. 8 was converted to kindling wood and had to be scrapped, while No. 15 went to Rosslyn shop for a new front end.

Power-short dispatchers also would often appropriate passenger cars for freight hauling, with equally distressing results. Car No. 12, another of the rugged 1911 GF&OD Jewetts, was a favorite for this work and suffered a variety of indignities in the process. It was said that lackadaisical crews sometimes built fires on the car floor to keep warm. On one of its wayfreight assignments in 1918 its nose was banged while switching the Trap Rock stone quarry near Leesburg. On

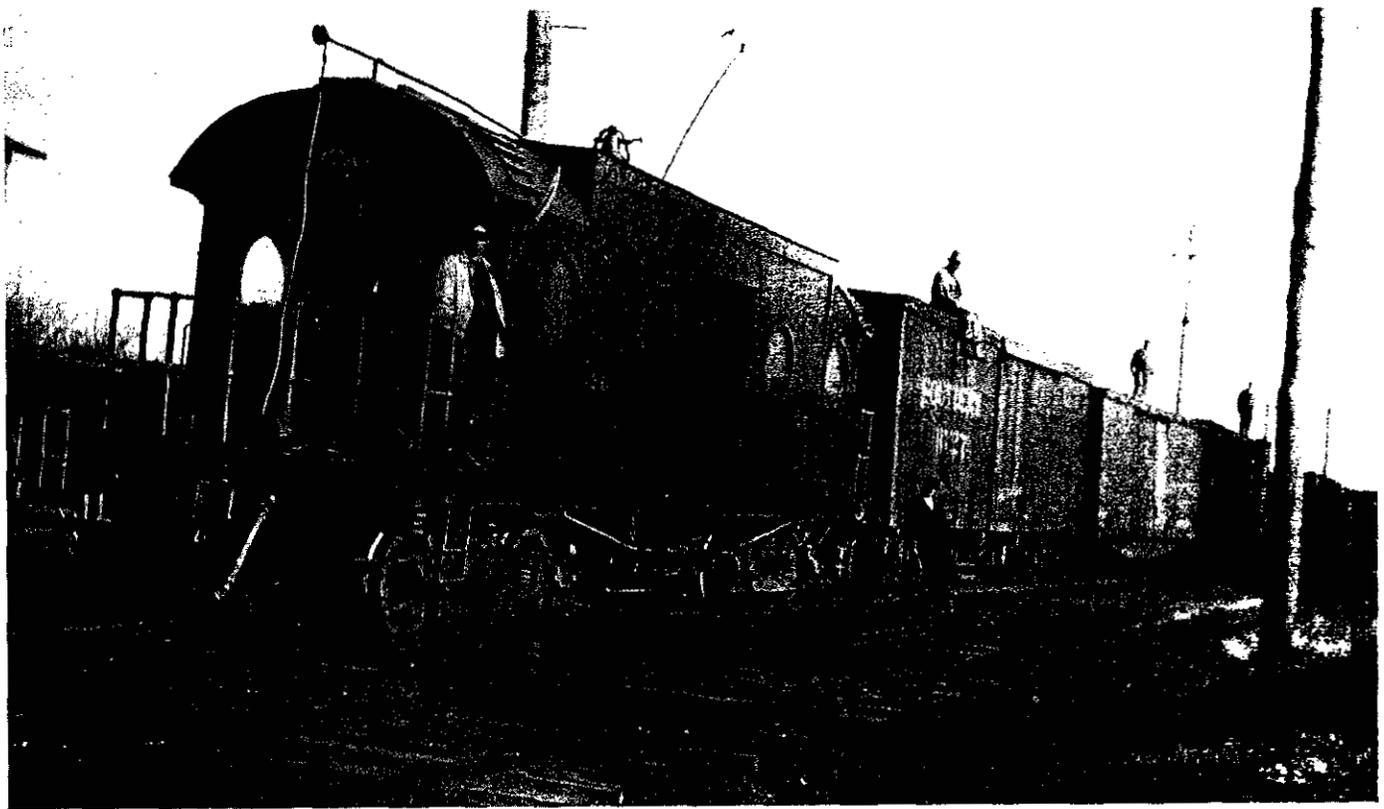
this occasion the crew was switching five heavily loaded stone cars on a grade without connecting their air brake lines to the light electric car. The weight and momentum of the cars overcame the trolley and pushed it downhill where it was incereemoniously impaled on the end of a steel gondola car. Two years later the hapless No. 12 was knocked off its truck center pins when its motorman tried to stop fast on a downgrade with seven loaded cars and three empties in tow.

Thanks to its equipment and other problems, train schedules tended to be erratic and arbitrary. Regular trains were annulled, terminals changed, or extras run with scant attention to public notice. The company's financial troubles helped aggravate the already fitful service. Sobered by large losses in 1912 and 1913 it cut Great Falls Division schedules by 30 per cent in 1914, a time when traffic was ballooning. The chronic crowding hit new peaks and complaints flooded in to every regulatory agency in sight. In 1916 one despairing Cherrydale commuter wrote to the Interstate Commerce Commission that he had waited 40 minutes for an inbound train, only to watch it whiz by him with "people not only hanging onto the steps but standing on the coupling of the car." Another commuter claimed to have counted 300 people crammed into the cramped Georgetown terminal at 5:00 one afternoon in 1915 and noted that the cars were leaving so crowded that the motormen could barely operate them. Things were about the same in 1918 when a woman war worker with a gift for rhetoric described her outing to Great Falls to a local newspaper:

"The Great Falls car hove in sight and men and women braced themselves as for battle. I looked about for someone in uniform to handle the prospective belligerents but there was no one and the melee developed into a free-for-all fight. Men and women fought tooth and nail to enter the car; no quarter was asked or given account of sex... I have lived in New York and seen subway congestion during rush hours and the crowds at the Brooklyn Bridge, but for sheer brutal disorder I have never seen anything like the business at 36th and M Streets in Washington."

And in June 1920 the Herndon *Observer* carried this tidbit, quoted in its entirety:

"On Monday evening last, Mr. Forest of Epiphany Avenue boarded an Old Dominion car at Vanderwerken and in his arms he held a pig. The conductor of the car complained to him



Certainly a one-of-a-kind, freight motor 26 was an artful reworking of a damaged boxcar. It emerged from Rosslyn shop in 1919 and poses with a freight train in Leesburg shortly afterward. With its arrival, the W&OD sold its two steam locomotives. (W&OD)

about bringing the pig on the car. Mr. Forest in a gentle tone apologized to the little pig for forcing it to ride on a Great Galls [sic] car.”

One wonders whether “Great Galls” was really a typographical error.

During summer weekends Great Falls Park traffic was so great that the intermediate communities along the line went without service as the overloaded cars groaned by, unable to sandwich in another soul. Doubtless correctly, during World War I the Alexandria (Arlington) County Board of Health officially accused the Great Falls cars of being influenza breeders.

Congestion was only slightly better on the Bluemont Division, although this section had its own peculiarities. True to its heritage as a railroad branch line, the single track railroad was run entirely by a combination of timetable authority, train orders, manual block procedures, and Morse Code telegraphic communication. During heavy traffic days dispatchers, train crews, and lineside station agents struggled to keep things straight. In addition to the total of 22 regularly scheduled passenger and milk runs, many trains would run in two or three sections, sometimes with extras thrown

in. And, of course, there was usually at least one wayfreight—sometimes two or even three—trying to switch cars, load and unload less-than-carload freight, load cattle, and make some headway over the road. It was not surprising that the operating employees sometimes got muddled and made things worse. In 1919, for example, a passenger train crew forgot its place in the lineup and waited at a siding for a nonexistent meet. Within half an hour seven other trains were tied up. In December 1912 the Farmers Club of Loudoun County complained that “some of the cars have taken as long as eight hours to make the trip from Washington to Leesburg in the past week.”

In fairness to the railroad’s beleaguered operating managers, at least some of their problems were (and still are) all too common where a new operation takes over already established and growing businesses and must hit the ground running fast. (Indeed, there were strong echoes in the woes of newly merged mega-railroad systems in the 1990s.) The W&OD embarked on a complex new operation in a burgeoning market with too little time for preparation or training, and insufficient funding. On the Bluemont line it had replaced



Northern Virginia was a major milk supplier to Washington, much of it brought in by the W&OD. A variety of vehicles crowd the Rosslyn milk platform in this bustling early 1920s view looking southwest from present Nash St. Note the Chevy Chase Dairy's electric truck in the center. Behind it is the secondhand wood baggage car No. 30, a regular on the W&OD's milk train. (Thomas Underwood collection)

many of the experienced Southern Railway employees with its own lower-paid and overworked people. Undoubtedly inexperience on all levels, turnover, and discipline difficulties with a large work force were partly to blame for its turbulent beginnings.

But there was a more fundamental problem. The peculiarities of its ownership and financing structure quickly led to indifferent direction and capital starvation. McLean and Elkins had set up the Washington & Old Dominion more like a two-man partnership than a normal corporation. Their control was absolute and all financing flowed from them—not only in providing capital but making up any cash deficits. Elkins' death in 1911 threw half of this partnership into the hands of his heirs, leaving only McLean with a direct personal interest in the property.

But he did not survive long either. Cancer claimed him June 9, 1916, essentially leaving his railway rudderless at the top and in a helpless financial position. McLean's roughly 60 percent majority interest now also

was dumped into his estate. And while Elkins' son, Davis Elkins, seemed competent to manage his father's affairs (among other things he filled out Elkins' term in the Senate and served as senator on his own from 1919 to 1925), McLean's offspring was something else. Ned McLean, his only son, seemed mostly preoccupied with drinking, traveling, giving lavish parties, and otherwise dissipating the \$100 million McLean and Walsh fortunes. (He became the Warren G. Harding administration's court jester, was disgraced in the Teapot Dome scandal, eventually led the *Washington Post* into bankruptcy and ended his life in a mental hospital.) This left the W&OD's direction in the hands of the estate lawyers who were emphatically unimpressed with its financial prospects and unwilling to support the troublesome railway any more than necessary.

As a result, money for improvements was not forthcoming at a time when it was most needed. In retrospect this pinchpenny policy was probably wise, as the events of the late 1920s and 1930s would amply prove,



Old Dominion cars line up at the south end of Aqueduct Bridge about 1921. Note the extra trolley pole on combine 44, used for two-wire operation over the bridge beginning in 1913. The center car is a 1911 ex-GF&OD Jewett and may be operating as part of a train. (W&OD)

but for the moment it meant woe for the Washington & Old Dominion. Maintenance was reduced severely; nothing was done with the light, worn rail, loose joints, and rotting ties inherited from the Southern. Overtaxed by traffic and undernourished for upgrading funds, the electric distribution system repeatedly broke down. Nighttime trains were sometimes run without headlights or interior lighting. Shop forces were cut to the point where it was almost impossible to keep enough equipment running. In early 1919, for example, over half the railway's roster of electric cars was either out of service at Rosslyn awaiting repairs or running in crippled condition.

Unsurprisingly, labor relations also deteriorated. Like many independent short lines, the W&OD was not originally unionized and cherished its lower wages and freedom to manage work assignments and conditions. Nonetheless many of its harrassed employees joined the Amalgamated Association of Street and Electric Railway Employees, and in the spring of 1916 disputes over wages, working conditions, and hours reached a boiling point. Attempts at arbitration failed

and in an unusual turn of events both the union and workers repudiated one another. A serious strike followed which even involved American Federation of Labor President Samuel Gompers. Trains were kept running amid recriminations, rioting, injunctions, and damage to equipment. Eventually the strike was quashed but the trouble did not end. A subsequent organizing drive by the Brotherhood of Railway Trainmen in 1920 was similarly stifled when the railway promptly fired all union members and won its case in court—again amid some violence and destruction.

The culmination of this ceaseless service turmoil was a succession of lawsuits, investigations, and hearings before the Virginia Corporation Commission which stretched out over four years. After an initial investigation in 1918, the state regulatory agency concluded that "because of insufficient labor and material, insufficient equipment and inadequate motive power, the Washington & Old Dominion Railway does not, and under existing conditions cannot give the public a reasonably safe, adequate and dependable service." The errant railway was severely chastised and ordered



In its heyday the W&OD had a schizophrenic personality—a hectic trolley operation at its east end, but at heart really a rural railroad elsewhere. Its accommodating nature is demonstrated in February 1939 as a westbound train stops at a nameless dirt crossroad just east of Bluemont to discharge a single traveler. (*J. J. Bowman*)

to rehabilitate its track, add rolling stock, beef up its electrical facilities, and observe the rudiments of state law regarding lights at night.

Old Dominion management's response was simple: it paid no attention. For the next three years the exasperated Commission continued listening to complaints, issuing orders, and levying fines for noncompliance—all of which were just as consistently ignored.

But there was a more halcyon side too. If riding the railroad was sometimes rigorous, it was also cheap. In 1914 one could buy a Sunday round-trip excursion ticket to Bluemont for \$1.00—over 100 miles of train travel. And by paying another dollar, passengers could take a four-hour auto tour in the Blue Ridge. Even thriftier souls could get to Great Falls and back for 35 cents. And despite service lapses and all the vociferous complaints, the Old Dominion cars managed to

carry over two million people a year without a single death or serious injury to passengers, or—in most cases—serious inconvenience.

A little money did dribble in for improvements. By 1916 the company finally got around to completing its electrification by stringing catenary wire over the seven-mile branch between Bluemont Junction and the end of its leased track at Potomac Yard. That was enough expenditure for the moment, however, and two more years went by before it was ready to replace its two 2-8-0 steamers with electric freight locomotives.

When it finally did so the results were the essence of frugality. Always adept at making do with what it had, the Rosslyn shop cobbled together two wood-bodied freight motors, using bodies and underframes from damaged boxcars, and trucks and electrical equipment from wrecked passenger cars. Sandwiching the

work between its regular repair jobs, the shop turned out motor No. 25 in 1918 and No. 26 the following year. Utilitarian-looking No. 25 plainly betrayed its boxcar origins, but someone put some style and creativity into No. 26, giving it curved end roofs and porthole side windows. Once both “new” motors were in service the two six-year-old Consolidations migrated south to a Georgia short line and the lineside water tanks were taken down.

Otherwise, life on the Old Dominion could sometimes be colorful. The crush of passenger business inevitably brought problems with unruly patrons, and with little or no police help to call upon it was left to the crews to resolve them. They did so in a direct fashion. With its heavy day-trip traffic, the Great Falls Division was particularly plagued and in response sometimes took on the atmosphere of Dodge City. Mr. John F. Burns, an oldtime rider, recalled that “as kids we were quite aware of the shoulder holsters the conductors wore under their coats, and thought the Capital Traction [streetcar] conductors real pantywaists with no pistols—quite as though they’s left their punches or changeholders at home.” Continued Mr. Burns:

“I recall one occurrence about 1920 or ’21 on the famous ‘3:15’, which was loaded with school children and consequently avoided by respectable, peace-loving people. When the car reached Maplewood station [west of Cherrydale] there was a scuffle in the back of the car, which at first drew little attention. However, a man drew a long knife on Conductor Dawson, a large and somewhat somber older man. The fracas had moved

outside before many of us were aware of it and Conductor Dawson had drawn his revolver. After two or three turns around the station in a ‘peek-a-boo-I-see-you’ routine, the fellow saw a clear chance and took off up Lee Highway with legs a-flying while Dawson took his position in the middle of the road taking carefully aimed shots at the fleeing figure. I saw the man on the car a few days later. He had a large bandage on one cheek, suggesting that one bullet had at least grazed, if not passed through his cheek.”

Some gun-toting trainmen were merely sportsmen. In 1916, for instance, nighttime passengers were startled by a shotgun-wielding motorman taking potshots out his front window at rabbits which hopped out of the bushes into the headlight beam.

Others apparently practiced a casual kind of larceny. One long-time employee recalled that one milk train crew carried a butter churn on their run. As the train rolled along they would pilfer a milk can, convert the contents, and sell the product in Washington or Rosslyn between runs. The telltale empty cans were pitched from the train as it trundled over the high and remote Goose Creek trestle east of Leesburg.

As the decade drew to a close the deficits continued unabated, a perfect record thusfar. But business was still on the rise. In 1919 the Old Dominion posted its highest gross income yet—\$660,921—a heartening improvement over the \$425,948 it had taken in during its first full year of life in 1913. The outlook seemed moderately encouraging and perhaps the years ahead would be happier.



Wood express car 30 reputedly came from the Washington Southern Railway, once part of the Richmond-Washington railroad route. This atmospheric ark carried milk and express through the 1920s, then was demoted to use as a storage shed at Bluemont Junction where it survived until 1946. Its swaybacked posture betrays its 19th century wood underframe. (H. H. Harwood, Jr. collection)

**SAFETY FIRST**

**Washington & Old Dominion  
Railway**

**GREAT FALLS DIVISION  
SCHEDULE OF TRAINS**

**"GO TO THE FALLS"**



**WASHINGTON AND OLD DOMINION  
RAILWAY**

**W. B. EMMERT**  
General Manager

**J. V. DAVIS**  
General Passenger Agent

**WASHINGTON, D. C.**

**EFFECTIVE FEBRUARY 22, 1914**

**Free Dancing,  
Free Movies, &c.**

**Great Falls**  
VIRGINIA

**Popular Amusements**

**Electric Illumination of  
Falls Every Night**

**Take Electric Cars From 36th & M Sts. N.W.**  
(Aqueduct Bridge)

*(Washington Post, June 25, 1915; Frank Tosh collection)*

# THE NOT-SO-ROARING TWENTIES

1920 - 1929



The essence of the country interurban: Electric combine 43 and RPO-express combine 44 stop at the former Southern Railway Purcellville station in 1940. (*J. F. Burns*)

By 1920 the Washington & Old Dominion's wildest and wooliest days were behind it. Pressures from passengers and the Virginia Corporation Commission had their effect, and the railway began to take on a semblance of order. A few more property improvements were made and schedules became more predictable. Coincidentally, a new general manager, Jefferson V. Davis, took over in 1918. The 29-year-old Davis had worked in the Southern Railway's Washington traffic office before joining the W&OD in 1912 as its General Freight and Passenger Agent.

He faced some new problems, however. Unfortunately, the new orderliness largely stemmed from a

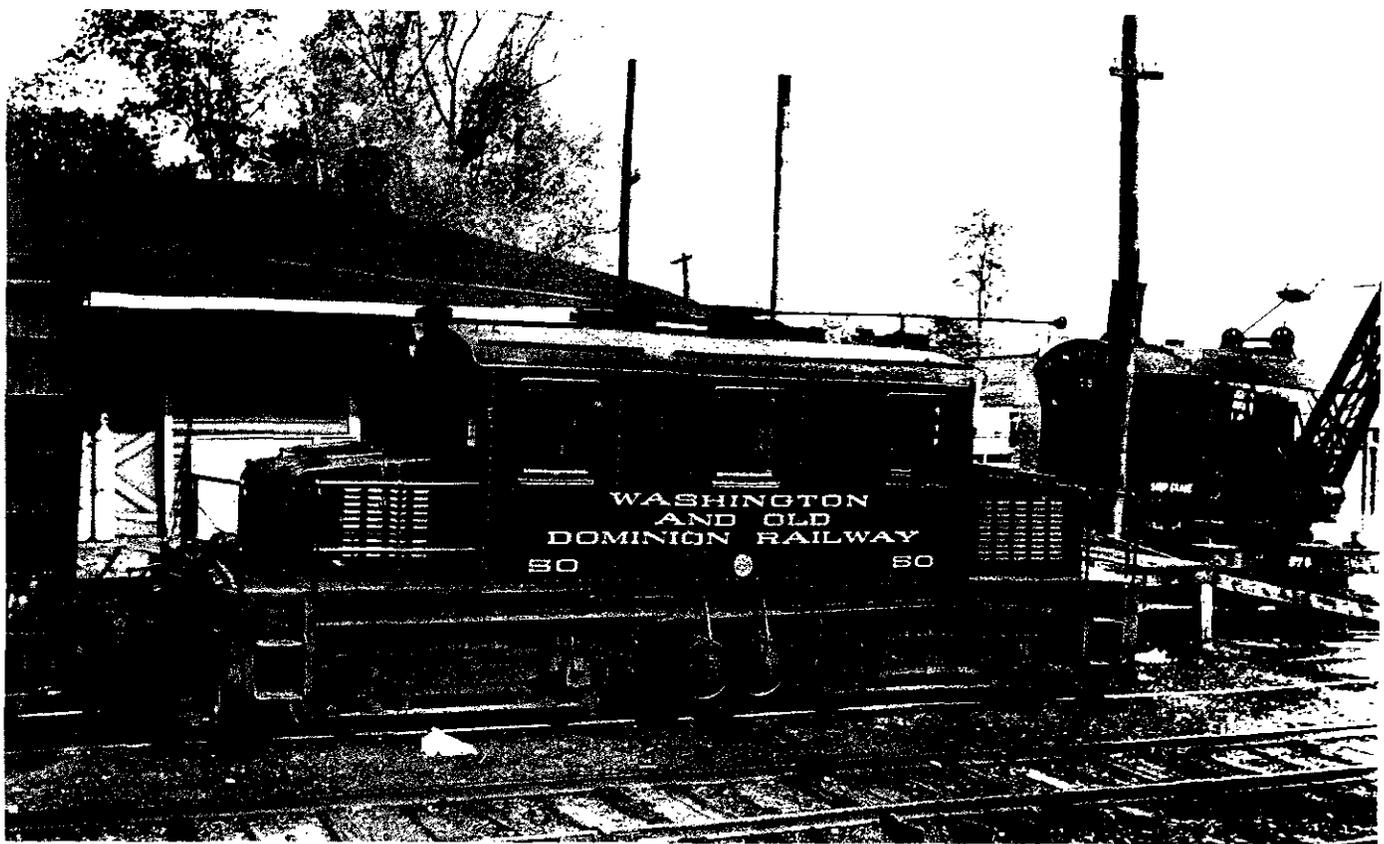
sudden decline in riders, which cleared away much of the overcrowding. From 2.6 million passengers carried in 1915, traffic had slid to 1.3 million in the recession year of 1921. By 1926 the figure was down to 886,000. Again the Great Falls Division was the major culprit; the war had brought changes in amusement tastes, and trolley rides to picnics in a park were not the same pleasure they were in a simpler era. More significantly, many riders were now driving. Autos were reliable and cheap, and suburbanites found it far easier to drive directly into Washington rather than hike to the trolley stop, wait for a car, and transfer to a street-car at the other end. It was much the same out on the



The "Blue Ridge", the W&OD's only parlor car, was a low-cost rebuilding of 1912 trailer coach 202. Assigned to the "Loudoun Limited" in 1928, its life was brief and it was retired in 1932 when this photo was made in Rosslyn. (H. E. Johnston)



The W&OD's first "modern" all-steel passenger cars were three 1918 Brill trailers bought in 1923 from the Washington-Virginia Ry. and motorized by the Rosslyn shop. They mostly worked Great Falls Division runs. No. 80 is at Rosslyn in 1933. (R. A. Perkin)



Utilitarian steel freight motors 50 and 51 took over the W&OD's heavier freight chores in the early 1920s. Built to a standardized Baldwin-Westinghouse design, they were rugged and often handled overloads without complaint. Here No. 50 rests Rosslyn in 1936. As of 1999 it still operated in Iowa—a service life of almost 80 years. (L. W. Rice)

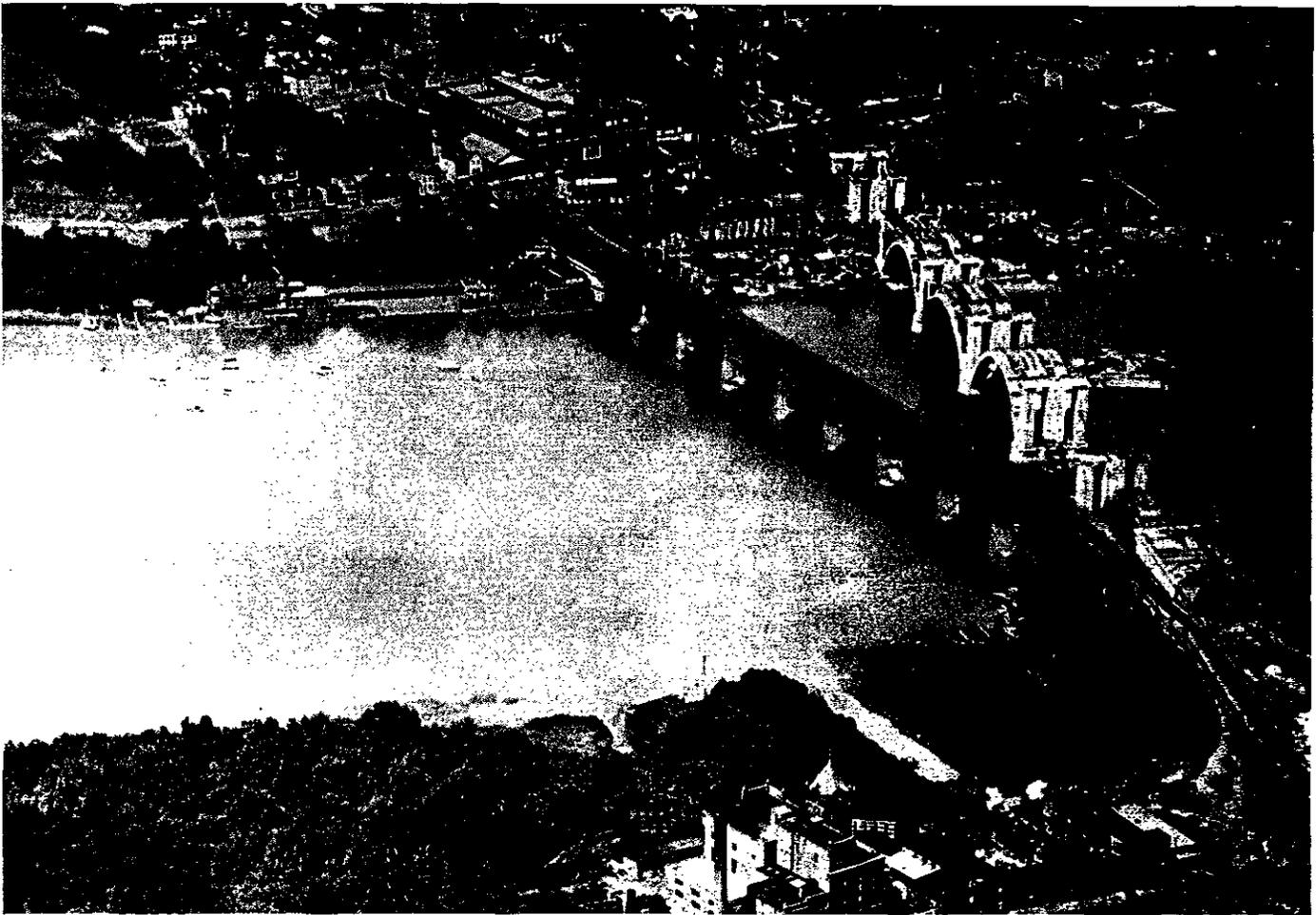
Bluemont Division. Model T's were appearing on the farm roads, along with motor trucks, and fewer and fewer excursionists went to the Blue Ridge by train.

Almost immediately Davis cut back Bluemont Division train schedules. As early as 1918 the ten round-trip runs were pruned to six. Otherwise, however, he tried to make the line's services more attractive and even give them some badly needed flair. In late 1921 he put on extra trains running every half hour between Washington and Cherrydale to placate commuters and shoppers on the system's busiest section. The flair came in 1920 when he cautiously experimented with the line's first real limited train service—a fast (by Old Dominion standards) commuter-oriented run between Washington and Leesburg. The new train began surprisingly quietly, running as an unadvertised advance section of regular trains. Although not shown in the public timetables, the new service immediately caught on and became a permanent fixture, with a semi-official name—the “Washington—Leesburg Limited.” The “Limited” became the line's pride, and conductors were even ordered to disdain most passes. Stopping only at

major points such as Falls Church, Vienna, and Herndon—and relieved of mail and express chores—it could manage a brisk 26 mph average speed, at least four mph faster than anything else on the road. By 1924 the “Limited” was finally recognized in the timetables, renamed the “Loudoun Limited”, and given the extra-special train numbers 600 and 700.

In what turned out to be the railway's last grand gesture, the “Loudoun Limited” was given true first-class accommodations. In 1928 one of the now-surplus 1912 open-end trailer coaches was rolled into the Rosslyn shop and refitted with 24 individual parlor seats—secondhand, of course. It emerged with a new name, “Blue Ridge”, and was tacked on the rear of the “Limited”, manned by a white-jacketed porter. In 1929 the “Limited's” run was extended to Bluemont on a fast two-hour schedule.

Equipment was modestly augmented too. Base service on the Great Falls Division was modernized in 1923 when the W&OD picked up three secondhand 1918 steel passenger trailer coaches from the neighboring Washington-Virginia Railway. After Rosslyn



Work is well under way on the Francis Scott Key Bridge in this early 1920s view from the Rosslyn side of the Potomac. At the top center of the photo is the trainshed of the W&OD's 36th & M Streets terminal in Georgetown; immediately to its right is the still-extant former Capital Traction Co. car barn and office building. Sharp-eyed readers may spot three W&OD cars at the lower right corner. (LeRoy O. King collection)

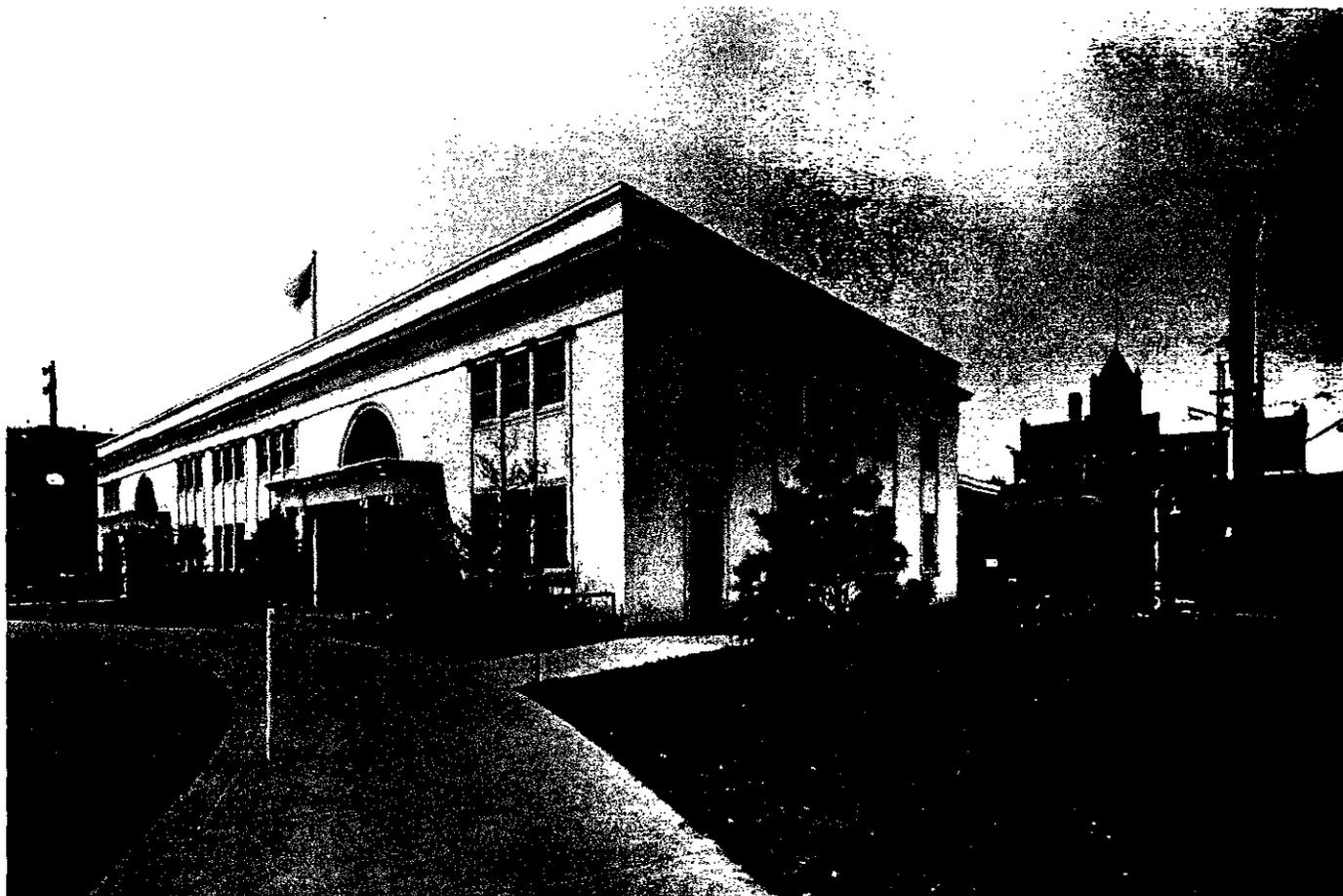
shop installed electric motors and controls, they were sent out to supplant the aging original GF&OD roster, by now depleted by wrecks and strike violence. More relevant for the company's future, its freight muscle was given a substantial boost with two 50-ton 400 hp steel Baldwin-Westinghouse electric freight motors—the line's first newly built equipment since 1912. Nos. 50 and 51 arrived in 1920 and 1922 respectively; rated at 400 tons—about two-thirds more than home-built Nos. 25 and 26—they took over most of the daily carload freight work.

Then came an amazingly uncharacteristic improvement—a grand new passenger terminal at Rosslyn. It was, of course, not paid for by the railroad.

By 1920 the Aqueduct Bridge had lived longer than it deserved, and work began on a high-capacity modern concrete highway span to replace the ancient, narrow structure. The W&OD's Aqueduct Bridge

franchise gave it the right to operate on the new Francis Scott Key Bridge, as the replacement was to be called. But the cost of building new conduit track (required by D. C. law) over the bridge to reach its cramped little Georgetown terminal had little appeal, especially in view of the now-dubious passenger picture. At the same time Washington's Capital Traction Company wanted to extend its Georgetown streetcar line to Rosslyn. A deal was struck whereby the streetcar company would assume the bridge franchise and in exchange would build the W&OD a new terminal adjacent to its planned Rosslyn loop.

And quite a terminal it was. About \$80,000 went into the long two-story classical-style concrete structure located on the west side of the traffic circle at the end of the new bridge. Spacious waiting rooms occupied the main floor, with a high vaulted ceiling, interior columns, a ticket office, refreshment bar, and



Rosslyn terminal in all its newly opened glory. Opened in late 1923, it anchored the west side of the old Rosslyn traffic circle and was immediately adjacent to the Lee Highway. (W&OD)

newsstand. (Company offices, however, were moved to a stolid three-story building at 31st and M Streets in Georgetown, which Davis re-christened the Old Dominion Building.) The Rosslyn terminal was unquestionably the Washington & Old Dominion's best remembered landmark; for many years too, it was Rosslyn's second most notable structure—the first being the hulking 1896 brick brewery building on Lee Highway opposite the W&OD shop.

The Key Bridge and Capital Traction's Rosslyn streetcar line opened in January 1923 but the W&OD continued running over the Aqueduct Bridge for most of the year. The new Rosslyn terminal's doors finally opened in December, the bridge operation ceased, and the Georgetown station was vacated (ironically the site later became a gas station). Its trainshed framing, however, was frugally dismantled and reassembled in Rosslyn as a new car shop to replace the original GF&OD structure. Abandoned and emphatically unloved, the ancient Aqueduct Bridge nonetheless remained in place another ten years.

Along with the "Limited" and palatial new terminal, the railroad even got a one-shot taste of the ultimate in Class I railroading—the all-Pullman train. The occasion was a 1922 Shriners convention in Leesburg. A contingent from Richmond chartered five sleepers and an RF&P office car which were to run as a special train all the way. The W&OD took it all in stride; after a pair of chuffing RF&P switchers pushed the six heavy-weight cars up onto the W&OD interchange at Potomac Yard, husky steel electric motor No. 50 coupled on and amazed the little huddle of kibitzing railroaders by humming off with little apparent effort.

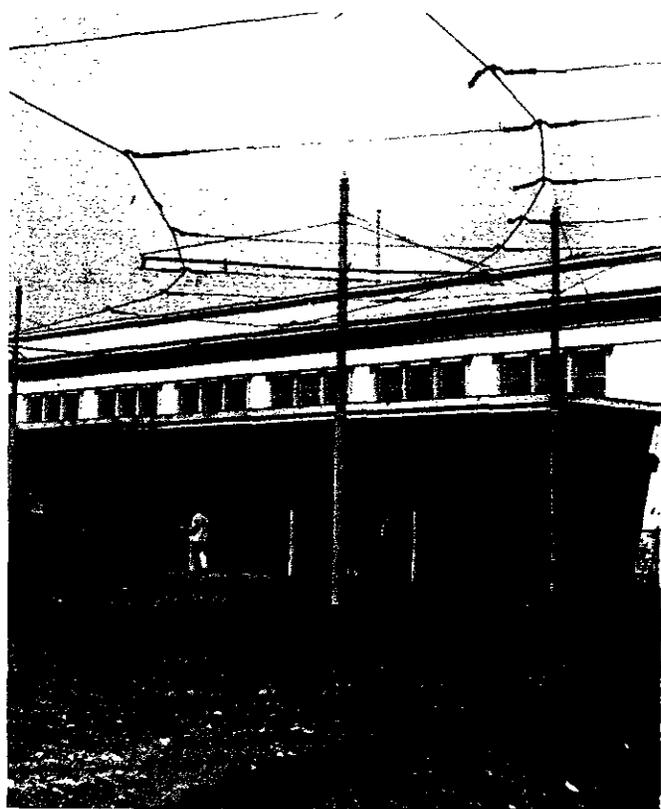
Always looking for ways to build passenger business, Davis also decided to try the latest transportation innovation—a motor bus. Apparently hoping to feed back-country traffic to his two rail divisions, he acquired a 21-passenger Dodge bus and in November 1925 began operating from Chantilly to Herndon, then northeast to Elkins station near Great Falls. The vehicle was kept and serviced at the Herndon Garage. His feeder-bus theory was sound enough, but almost predictably

.....

this particular route generated little business and was dropped a year later.

But the significant story was freight. As passengers melted away from the rails, carload freight began a colorless but steady and profitable growth. Freight revenues crept from \$155,000 in 1915 to \$231,000 in 1920, and by 1926 freight was earning more than passengers, mail, express, and milk combined. In fact the 1926 operating results dramatically illustrated the profitability of freight vs. passenger traffic: two (or three at the most) daily freight runs earned \$274,000 during the year while 134 passenger trains took in only \$256,000.

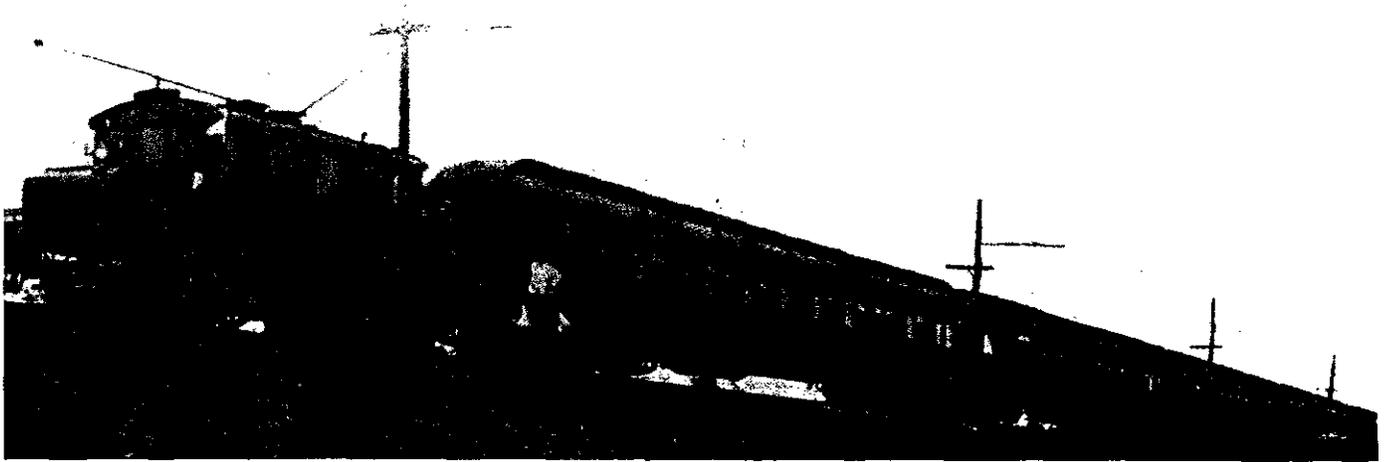
But regardless of where its money came from the Washington & Old Dominion was still relentlessly heading toward disaster. Signs of serious trouble appeared in 1929. In what was generally considered a boom year elsewhere, income from all sources—freight included—dropped sharply; the operating ratio climbed to 90 and the chronic deficit hit a new height. Furthermore, as Old Dominion accountants totaled up 1929's results they recorded an ominous trend: ten straight years of diminishing gross revenues and an unbroken 17-year record of losses. But even then they probably did not suspect what was in store.



Rosslyn terminal from the rear, about 1925. Leaving the station, the tracks immediately crossed the Lee Highway and curved sharply west. Great Falls Division car 5 loads at the left. (J.A. Fielding)



A two-car train headed by combine 43 makes ready to leave Rosslyn terminal about 1938 with what is clearly a maid-of-all-work run west. (J. P. Shuman)



The famous 1922 Shriners special poses for posterity at Potomac Yard before trundling off to Leesburg behind freight motor 50. (From *Electric Traction* magazine)



Back at its more mundane job of supporting the ailing railway, No. 50 switches boxcars at Rosslyn. The Lee Highway is below the railroad grade at the far right in this 1940 scene. (J. P. Shuman)

# WASHINGTON AND OLD DOMINION RAILWAY

## Bluemont Division

This Time Table shows the time at which trains may be expected to arrive at and depart from stations named, but their arrival and departure at the time stated are not guaranteed, nor does the Railway hold itself responsible for any delay nor any consequences arising therefrom.

### WASHINGTON—BLUEMONT JUNCTION—BLUEMONT

(Subject to change without notice.)

EASTERN TIME	Daily Except Sundays and Legal Holidays (See Note)										Sundays and Legal Holidays Only (See Note)												
	Westbound Trains					Eastbound Trains					Westbound Trains				Eastbound Trains								
	A	B 1	3	A	B 5	2	4	B 6	600	A	B 8	A	10	A	B 12	50	B 52	A	B 54	A	B 56	A	B 58
<b>Lv. ● Washington (Roslyn Terminal Sta.)</b> .....	A.M. 6.21	A.M. 7.20	A.M. 11.35	P.M. 12.18	P.M. 2.05											A.M. 7.23	A.M. 8.30	A.M. 9.50	P.M. 1.15	P.M. 2.00	P.M. 5.01	P.M. 6.00	P.M. 8.15
● Thrifton.....																							
● Bluemont Jct.....	6.35	7.37	11.48	12.32	2.25											7.41	8.50	10.10	1.30	2.20	5.14	6.16	8.35
● Falls Church.....		7.43	11.53		2.31												8.55	10.15		2.25		6.21	8.40
● West Falls Church.....		7.48	11.57		2.35												8.58	10.18		2.28		6.24	8.44
● Dunn Loring.....		7.54	12.03		2.41												9.03	10.23		2.33		6.29	8.50
● Wedderburn.....		7.57	12.06		2.44												9.05	10.25		2.35		6.31	8.53
● Vienna.....		8.02	12.10		2.48												9.09	10.29		2.39		6.35	8.57
● Hunter.....		8.10	12.21		2.56												9.16	10.36		2.46		6.42	9.05
● Wiehle.....		8.22	12.32		3.08												9.25	10.45		2.55		6.51	9.17
● Herndon.....		8.29	12.39		3.15												9.30	10.50		3.00		6.57	9.24
● Sterling.....		8.39	12.49		3.27												9.38	10.58		3.08		7.05	9.33
● Ashburn.....		8.49	12.59		3.36												9.47	11.07		3.17		7.14	9.42
● Belmont Park.....		8.55	1.04		3.41												9.51	11.12		3.21		7.19	9.48
● Leesburg.....		9.10	1.16		3.58												10.01	11.22		3.31		7.29	10.00
● Clarke Gap.....		9.21	1.27		4.07												10.11	11.32		3.41		7.39	
● Paeonian Springs.....		9.24	1.30		4.10												10.15	11.35		3.45		7.42	
● Hamilton.....		9.28	1.34		4.14												10.19	11.39		3.51		7.46	
● Purcellville.....		9.44	1.43		4.30												10.28	11.49		4.02		7.55	
● Round Hill.....		9.53	1.51		4.38												10.36	12.01		4.12		8.03	
<b>Ar. ● Bluemont Va.</b> .....	A.M. 10.05	A.M. 2.09	P.M. 4.50	P.M. 4.50	P.M. 6.30	P.M. 7.00	P.M. 8.15	P.M. 9.27	P.M. 10.45	P.M. 11.25	P.M. 12.15	P.M. 1.00	P.M. 2.15	P.M. 3.30	P.M. 4.45	P.M. 5.30	P.M. 6.45	P.M. 8.00	P.M. 9.15	P.M. 10.30	P.M. 11.45	P.M. 1.00	P.M. 2.15

Typifying W&OD Bluemont Division passenger service in the late 1920s, this March 1926 timetable shows the "Loudoun Limited" (train No. 700 westbound and 600 eastbound) on its limited-stop commuter run between Washington and Leesburg. It carried no passengers between its intermediate stopping points.

# STRUGGLE FOR LIFE

1930 - 1940



Symbolic of the W&OD's painful transition from passenger hauling to freight, combine 41 is sidlined in Rosslyn while freight motor 26 shuffles boxcars in the small but busy yard. (L. W. Rice)

The black days came in with a bang. The peculiarly coincidental blows of depression, improved motor vehicles and roads, and shifts in travel habits knocked the already wobbly Washington & Old Dominion to the ground, with bleak prospects for recovery.

Thusfar the road had been fortunate in one respect; the McLean and Elkins estates had begrudgingly continued to make up the cash deficits and thus protected it from the foreclosures and creditor lawsuits which now were slaughtering other interurbans and small railroads. But that shelter was snatched away in 1932.

Financial and personal problems—especially within the McLean family—set off litigation to dissolve the old agreements and put the railroad on its own. On January 29, 1932 the W&OD was put into receivership and General Manager Davis simultaneously left.

Two receivers were appointed to represent the two ownership blocs, and they in turn picked George C. Baggett as their general manager. A 50-year-old native Alexandrian, Baggett had followed much the same career path as his predecessor, beginning in the comparative security of the Southern Railway's traffic



Now relegated mostly to commuter runs, three of the 1912 coaches lay over at Leesburg in mid-1936. (*J. P. Shuman*)



Symptomatic of the Great Falls Division's problems is this early 1930s view looking west alongside the Lee Highway in Cherrydale. Autos and buses on the newly paved highway were fast emptying the electric cars on what was once the line's most heavily trafficked section. (*W&OD*)



May 1935 was not a merry month for the Great Falls Division. Just west of Vanderwerken station, freight motor 26 and a track gang remove the rusted rails of the abandoned line. (J.F.Burns)

department and moving to the W&OD in 1918. At the time of his promotion he was the railway's traffic manager, responsible for pricing and selling its passenger and freight services, and also served as Davis's second in command. In taking over the general manager's job Baggett faced the challenge of his life in making a future for a company which seemed to have none.

Clearly the railway could not continue doing business the way it had. During its 20 years of existence the Washington & Old Dominion had run up deficits now totaling \$3.8 million, and the losses were mounting dramatically. The 1931 deficit alone almost equalled the year's total gross income. The operating ratio (that is, the ratio of direct operating expenses to income) hit a discouraging 117.5 per cent that year and climbed to 118.4 per cent in 1932. Passenger traffic had plunged perceptitously; the 2.6 million riders of 1915 had now slid to a sickly 396,000 as people deserted the trains for their Model T's, new Model A's, Chevrolets, or the shaky motorbus operations which had appeared in Arlington. Milk traffic dried up with bewildering speed as trucks took the product to market. As late as 1930 milk had brought in a fairly healthy \$23,451; two years later the

figure was only \$4,438. Even carload freight looked dismal. By 1933 it was earning less than half what it did in 1926, and on some days crews simply sat through the day at the Potomac Yard interchange hoping for a car to show up.

Furthermore, the Old Dominion's original promoters had made some serious misjudgments which now hung as millstones around its neck. The Bluemont Division electrification which seemed to hold so much promise in 1911 was an inefficient and costly white elephant by 1932. Traffic had dropped to the point where maintaining the installation was simply uneconomic. Additionally, McLean had let too much optimism creep into the Bluemont Branch lease. The 50-year contract with the Southern now called for \$60,000 a year, good years or bad. In 1932 this rental amounted to almost one-quarter of the W&OD's entire system gross revenues, and needless to say, it was not being paid.

Yet the W&OD was really nothing without the Alexandria-Bluemont line. It accounted for 75 per cent of the company's route mileage and generated virtually all of its carload freight revenues as well as a relatively lucrative Post Office contract. So, under the Southern's



Action on the Old Dominion: a westbound train for Bluemont has just left Rosslyn and is climbing the long grade alongside the Lee Highway. Interstate 66 now occupies the railroad right-of-way in this area. (R.S. Crockett)

sufferance, Baggett continued to run his trains without a lease, but in the meantime the Southern claimed title to the electric wires, substations, and other improvements the W&OD had put into the property.

Baggett's only solution was a complete purgative. By experience and inclination he was a freight man, with few illusions about his company's future as a passenger carrier. His first move was to trim more passenger trains. In 1932 he cut off all the short-haul trains between Rosslyn, Bluemont Junction, and Alexandria. Alexandria, the W&OD's ancestral home, became its first "freight service only" city and passenger trains no longer wound through the pretty Four Mile Run valley through Barcroft and Glencarlyn. The core service of six Bluemont Division round trips continued since most of these trains carried better-paying mail and express as well as some long-haul riders, but the "Loudoun Limited" name disappeared along with its parlor car and was replaced by a slower schedule.

Hard on the heels of the reduced passenger service came a wholesale purge of obsolete and now-unneeded rolling stock. By 1934, 12 wood electric passenger cars,

two express motors, the six 1912 open-platform trailer coaches (including the parlor car "Blue Ridge"), and a cabooses had been retired. Left to hold down the surviving service on the Bluemont Division were four electric freight motors, plus the four 1912 combines and six coaches originally bought for the line. Having cleared out all of the old GF&OD wood equipment, Baggett was left with the three rebuilt steel suburban cars bought from the Washington-Virginia Railway in 1923 to operate the Great Falls Division. To supplement them he was able to pick up five similar motor cars at scrap prices in 1933 from the defunct Mount Vernon, Alexandria & Washington Railway, one of the Washington-Virginia's successors.

In the meantime nothing was improving. By 1934 gross revenues had sunk to less than half the meager 1930 level. Arlington and Fairfax counties were pressing for \$84,755 in back taxes, and the Southern's unpaid rental climbed another notch. Cash in the bank stood at a paltry \$12,000, with at least \$200,000 in unpaid debts. One veteran office employee recalled occasions when "we would wait for the check to arrive from the



To match truck competition for less-than-carload freight, the W&OD began offering pickup and delivery service at its Rosslyn terminal, using this early 1930s-model GMC. (W&OD)

mail contract before we could pay anyone." Employees took wage cuts and considered themselves lucky to be working. Dissolution and abandonment were constant specters.

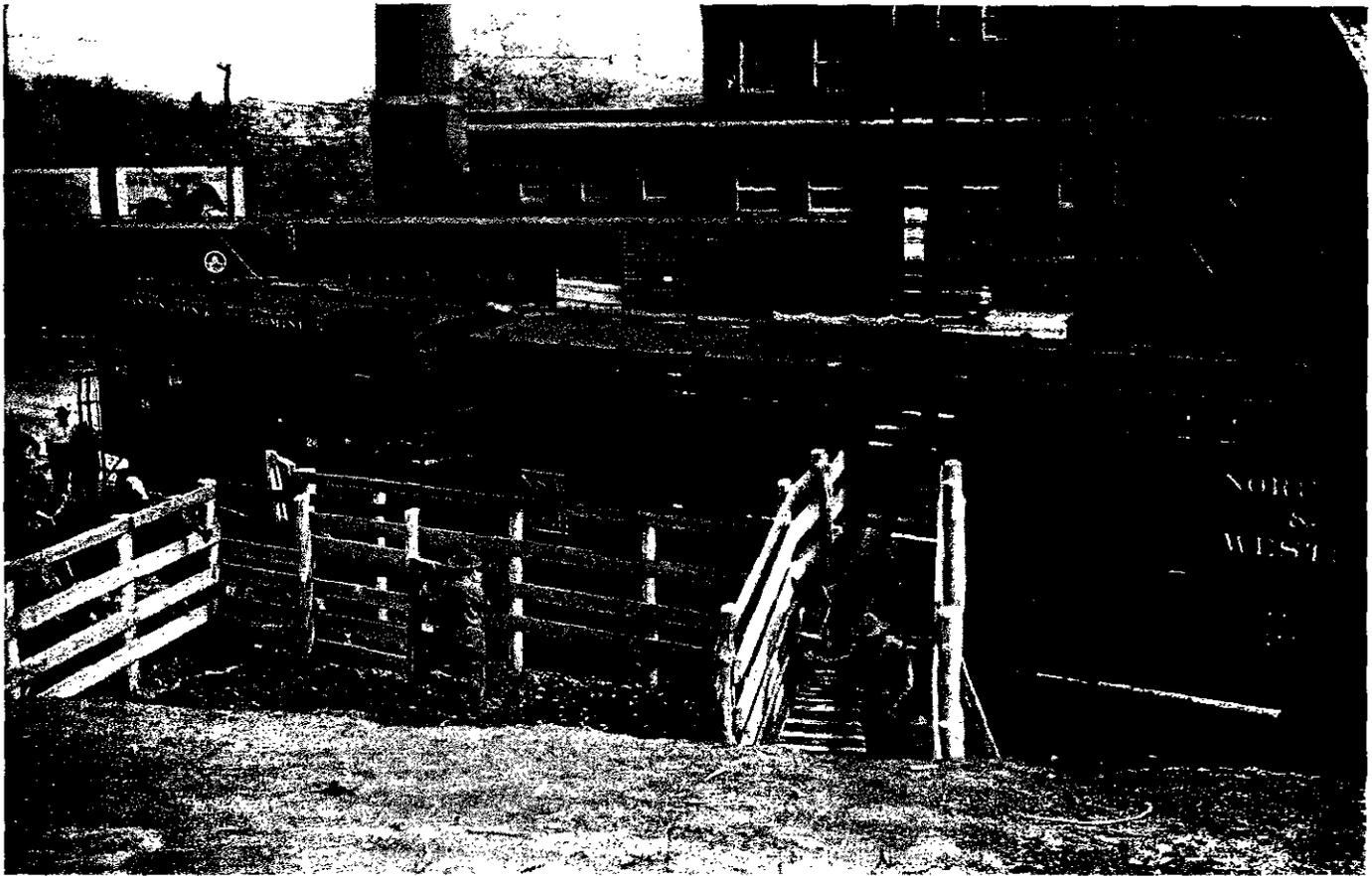
The next notch in the belt came quickly. It was already clear that the Great Falls Division had no chance of supporting itself. Although it was still the company's busiest segment, its business was severely diminished, unlikely to recover, and unprofitable anyway. Great Falls Park traffic had largely vaporized and a 1926 flood had destroyed part of the park's facilities. Suburban home building had screeched to a halt, and a succession of small bus operators had skimmed away much of the business in the populous Rosslyn-Cherrydale area. Even in better times it was economically unpromising—the business was all short-haul with low fares, and the commuter traffic demanded cars and crews which were idle during the rest of the day.

By 1932 Great Falls service was down to a total of only 28 daily trips—14 each way—a pathetic shadow

of the 128-plus trains which kept the wires singing in 1916. Freight traffic was next to nil; during all of 1932 and 1933 freight totaled only 209 tons—mostly fertilizer, feed, and pipe shipments.

To raise cash and reduce property taxes, Baggett already had partially liquidated the line. Between 1932 and 1934 one of the two tracks was gradually removed between Cherrydale and Great Falls. But the end was a foregone conclusion. Arlington and Fairfax counties needed a direct road through the developing area, and the rail line provided an ideally located and readily available right-of-way. A deal was arranged to permit the W&OD to abandon the route and exchange the property for the bulk of its unpaid taxes.

Amid vigorous protests from patrons who were left with no transportation until the new road was built, Baggett got his way. The entire Great Falls Division west of the Thrifton junction was shut down on June 8, 1934, after car No. 84—one of the recently-bought Mount Vernon, Alexandria & Washington secondhanders—



Some other freight moved itself. Cavalry horses for nearby Fort Meyer are unloaded at Rosslyn about 1939. (W&OD)

made the last run. The end had come so quickly that at least two of the secondhand MtVA&W cars bought the year before never saw service. All eight of the Falls Division cars were moved to Bluemont Junction in 1934, where they were dismantled. In some cases the carbodies were sold and some lived second lives as diners.

But residents of McLean and other spots along the line had to wait a while for their road. It was not until mid-1935 that portholed electric motor No. 26 was dispatched with a salvage crew to remove the once-bustling railway. Asphalt pavement then replaced the rails between Cherrydale and Great Falls; the road also made use of the steel trolley trestle over Difficult Run. As a memorial to the railway which had first developed the communities along the route, the road was called Old Dominion Drive—a name it still carries, although few present residents associate it with the long-departed trolley line.

The Rosslyn-Bluemont Junction segment remained as part of the Bluemont Division main line, although its double track was reduced to single. In another

economy move, the company offices were moved out of the Old Dominion Building at 31st and M Streets in Georgetown in 1932 and space was made for them in the cavernous but now underutilized Rosslyn passenger terminal. (The old Georgetown office building still stood in the late 1990s, by the way.)

With Baggett's vigorous pruning, enough hope existed to encourage everyone to untangle the company's financial affairs and try to keep it going. In 1935 the McLean and Elkins interests managed to reach an agreement which would allow a realistic reorganization. Davis Elkins, the old senator's son, had become interested enough in the property to attempt to save it, and put up \$35,000 for full ownership. In the process all of the old family claims were wiped out along with the debt incurred in electrifying and equipping the line in 1912.

Elkins and Baggett also negotiated a new lease with the Southern which set a graduated rental beginning at \$6,000 a year—only ten per cent of the existing rental—and scaling up to a maximum of ten per cent



Amid pastoral surroundings, eastbound express combine 44, at left, awaits a meet with approaching coach 72 at Ashburn in August 1940. (G. F. Cunningham)

of any gross revenues over \$400,000 a year. Also helping its economics, the W&OD (like most short line railroads at the time) received proportionately higher revenue divisions on interline freight movements handled with other railroads and also a certain amount of free freight car use from its connections.

The result of all these moves was to cut yearly charges by \$80,000, and by 1936 things looked brighter. With finances and physical plant now reduced to something potentially viable, Elkins ended the receivership. On April 16, 1936 his new Washington & Old Dominion *Railroad Company* took over operations, with George Baggett as vice president and general manager. (Recall that the old company was the *W&OD Railway*. This type of minor change was common in railroad reorganizations to maintain public name recognition and avoid a lot of relettering of equipment, buildings, and signs.)

The new company's assets were dubious at best. It actually owned only the five miles of track between Rosslyn and Bluemont Junction (the remaining 59 miles were still Southern property), plus ten obsolete interurban cars, four electric freight motors, an equally obsolete power system, and a passenger terminal too large for its needs.

Four years after disposing of the Great Falls line, Baggett chopped off another weak limb. Business on the line's western extremity, the seven miles between Purcellville and Bluemont, had largely withered up. The Bluemont excursionists were long gone and there was little else. Population of the four stations west of Purcellville totaled 600; the only significant freight customers—a small mill at Round Hill and a wheat elevator at Bluemont—had shut down years before and trucks had taken whatever other freight existed. The



Electric passenger service is in its last year as an eastbound train loads mail and a few passengers at Herndon while freight motor 25 waits in a siding. The date was August 17, 1940. (G. F. Cunningham)

deteriorating wood trestle at Round Hill needed rebuilding and the wobbly 56- and 60-pound rail, much of it dating to the mid-1880s, had to be replaced.

With the Southern's agreement, Baggett applied to the Interstate Commerce Commission to abandon the line in August of 1938. Chief among the complainants at the hearing was a Washington railroad enthusiast organization which testified that the group would be "seriously inconvenienced" if it could not make its yearly excursions to Bluemont. Doubtless the hapless railroad must have prayed for protection from its friends. Permission was quickly forthcoming anyway, and in March 1939 *W&OD* trains ended their runs at Purcellville. Nature quickly reclaimed the old grade to the base of the Blue Ridge, but the Round Hill passenger and freight stations were sold and still stood in the 1990s.

The passenger business continued its relentless slide and trains were taken off one by one. When the

Bluemont segment went in 1939, two of the traditional six passenger round trips went too, leaving two daily Rosslyn-Purcellville trips each way and two as far as Leesburg. Most trains were handled by two electric cars of varying types, all of them now painted in a bright, warm green with white striping. The Purcellville trips—geared mostly to mail, express, some less-than-carload freight, and a handful of local passengers—consisted of a combine and either an express-Railway Post Office car or a coach. Two coaches usually handled the Leesburg commuter run. By October 1940 only the two Purcellville round trips remained.

The next and perhaps saddest casualty was the Rosslyn passenger terminal, now an ironically impressive symbol of lost status. The building sat on government-owned land located at the Rosslyn end of the Key Bridge, now one of the principal highway gateways to Washington. In the late 1930s planning began to rebuild this area by



In the shadow of the Blue Ridge, a pair of combines headed by No. 41 prepare to leave the Bluemont terminal for Rosslyn in late morning on Memorial Day, 1935. (*J. J. Bowman*)

adding a new span to the bridge to accommodate the new George Washington Memorial Parkway beneath. In addition the land occupied by the near-moribund railway terminal now had considerable commercial value. Thus in 1939 the government evicted its probably-willing tenant. One of the little Baldwin-Westinghouse electric freight motors helped to pull down the 16-year-old structure and haul off the rubble, and a Marriott's Hot Shoppe restaurant eventually rose in its place. Company offices were moved to rented office space over a bowling alley in Rosslyn, and the two daily Purcellville passenger trains loaded at makeshift facilities tacked onto the Rosslyn car shop a block west of the old terminal.

Clearly it was just a matter of time for those two trains. During 1940 Baggett tried to end them but found himself up against some determined and colorful opposition. Mrs. Nellie Fletcher, a highly vocal Virginian from Leesburg, had decided to make W&OD passenger trains a personal crusade. Gathering petitions and

grandly declaiming such absurdities as "Mothers will never see their children again", Mrs. Fletcher managed to frustrate the railroad for almost a year with three successive delays. But the inevitable came on April 23, 1941 when the two-car train rolled into Rosslyn for the last time.

All but one of the remaining 1912 electric cars followed their predecessors to the fires at Bluemont Junction, although one combine mouldered through World War II on a spur outside Rosslyn. Probably to the annoyance of the displaced passengers, the old passenger schedules actually continued running for the still-viable mail and express contracts. The two Rosslyn-Purcellville "trains" each way consisted of single car No. 44, one of the electric combines which in 1930 had been rebuilt as a combination Railway Post Office-Railway Express car with no passenger accommodations. After the electrification was dismantled it continued on its runs hauled by a diesel—the railroad's saviour.

**WASHINGTON AND OLD DOMINION RAILWAY** 1915  
 No. 451

PASS Mr. P. B. Parke===  
 ACCOUNT CC to VP&GM, Southern Ry.

UNTIL DECEMBER 31ST UNLESS OTHERWISE ORDERED AND SUBJECT TO CONDITIONS ON BACK

*[Signature]*  
 VICE-PRESIDENT AND GENERAL MANAGER

NOT GOOD FOR REGULAR OR DAILY TRAVEL BETWEEN RESIDENCE AND PLACE OF BUSINESS

**WASHINGTON AND OLD DOMINION RAILWAY** 1924 A 185

PASS -Mr. P. B. Parke-  
 ACCOUNT Manager-Pass Bureau, Southern Railway System

BETWEEN ALL STATIONS UNTIL DECEMBER 31ST UNLESS OTHERWISE ORDERED AND SUBJECT TO CONDITIONS ON BACK

VALID ONLY WHEN COUNTERSIGNED BY MYSELF OR BY M. V. HAYNES OR I. Q. JENKINS

*[Signature]* *[Signature]*  
 GENERAL MANAGER

**Washington and Old Dominion Railroad** 1950-1951 No. 82

PASS Mr. H.H. Harwood, Jr.

BETWEEN ALL STATIONS UNTIL DECEMBER 31, 1951, UNLESS OTHERWISE ORDERED OR RESTRICTED BELOW AND SUBJECT TO CONDITIONS ON BACK.

Good until withdrawn

VALID WHEN COUNTERSIGNED BY MYSELF M. V. HAYNES OR I. Q. JENKINS

*[Signature]*  
 M. V. Haynes Vice Pres. & Gen. Mgr.

**SAFETY FIRST**

**WASHINGTON & OLD DOMINION RAILWAY**



**SYSTEM SCHEDULE OF TRAINS**



**WASHINGTON ALEXANDRIA BLUEMONT GREAT FALLS AND INTERMEDIATE POINTS**

**IN EFFECT MARCH 15, 1926**

J. V. DAVIS, G. C. BAGGETT,  
 Vice-Pres. & Gen'l. Mgr. Traffic Mgr.  
 WASHINGTON, D. C.

**SAFETY FIRST**


**DIESELS AND PROFITS**

1941-1956



The locomotive that did it: the W&OD's first diesel, No. 47, spots a hopper car at Alexandria Junction shortly after delivery in 1941. Note that the electric wires were still up and functional at this time. (*General Electric Co.*)

Partly behind Baggett's urgency to rid himself of the interurban cars was a pressing need to do something about the electrification problem. By 1940 freight carloadings had picked up to the point where more horsepower was required, while the now-weary electrical transmission system had to be either replaced or replenished with new auxiliary equipment. Replacement was certainly preferable, provided a cheap alternative was available.

By this time it was. By 1940 diesel-electric power was well proven, and the General Electric Company had

developed a small 44-ton 380 hp model specifically designed for short line and industrial use. The Washington & Old Dominion signed up for three of the pygmies—one delivered in 1941 and two the following year. Finding the money required a bit of creative sleight-of-hand; according to George Baggett it went this way: "We were struck with a bright thought... Why not request the Southern to lend us the down payment on the three diesels—with the understanding that we would turn over to them the copper and other materials forming part of the overhead electrical system, which



The W&OD may have ceased carrying passengers, but electric mail and express car 44 still made regular trips—and, briefly, still ran under the electric wires. Here it pauses for orders at Bluemont Junction enroute to Purcellville early on a May afternoon in 1941. (G. F. Cunningham)

they already owned but could not obtain until we changed to some other form of power.”

Painted black, grey, and white with colorful pinstriping, the three new units gradually took over from the four electric motors. Beginning in 1942, the wires were taken down in stages—first between Bluemont Junction and Purcellville, then on the branches to Rosslyn and Potomac Yard. One of the 1920s-era steel electric locomotives kept active in Rosslyn until 1944, switching freight cars in the small yard and pushing departing trains up the steep grade out of town. As they were slowly put out of work, three of the four electric motors were snapped up by war-burdened lines elsewhere—home-built wood freight motor No. 25 by Maryland’s Hagerstown & Frederick, steel center-cab No. 51 by the Cornwall Street Railway in Ontario, and, finally, its sister No. 50 by the Cedar Rapids & Iowa City in 1947. Amazingly, No. 50 still operated in 1999, having passed through four owners after leaving Rosslyn. Only the odd-looking No. 26 found no home and sat forlorn at Bluemont Junction for several years with its trolley poles reaching for the nonexistent wire. It was finally burned in 1946, one of

the last reminders of the Washington & Old Dominion’s electric era. (Interestingly, it was kept company at Bluemont Junction by one of the onetime New York elevated coaches; the 1878 relic had managed to survive all this time as a tool car—still carrying its faded GF&OD lettering.)

The impossible happened in 1940 when Baggett proudly reported a \$3500 profit, the first black ink in 28 years. The following year brought much better news; over \$22,000 was cleared as passenger service ended and freight income picked up.

Retrenchment and diesels had helped save the day, but more significant was an abrupt economic change in the territory along the railroad’s east end. Despite the Depression, Washington’s Virginia suburbs had been growing at a modest rate during the 1930s, but the war and immediate postwar period started the real population explosion. With it came a huge demand for housing and roads, and for once the Washington & Old Dominion’s location paid off. Its three little diesels began earning their keep immediately, hauling in carloads of brick, lumber, and cement from the Potomac Yard connection; from the Trap Rock quarry east of Leesburg,



When the wires came down, No. 44 was de-motorized and repainted, and continued its daily mail and express runs behind one of the new GE diesels. Here it readies for its afternoon run at Rosslyn in 1942. Electric wires are still up in the yard. (W&OD)

they rolled hopper cars and gondolas loaded with crushed stone eastward to highway projects in Arlington and eastern Fairfax counties. In all, freight carloads almost doubled between 1940 and 1942, and 1942 gross income hit \$369,623—the highest since 1930.

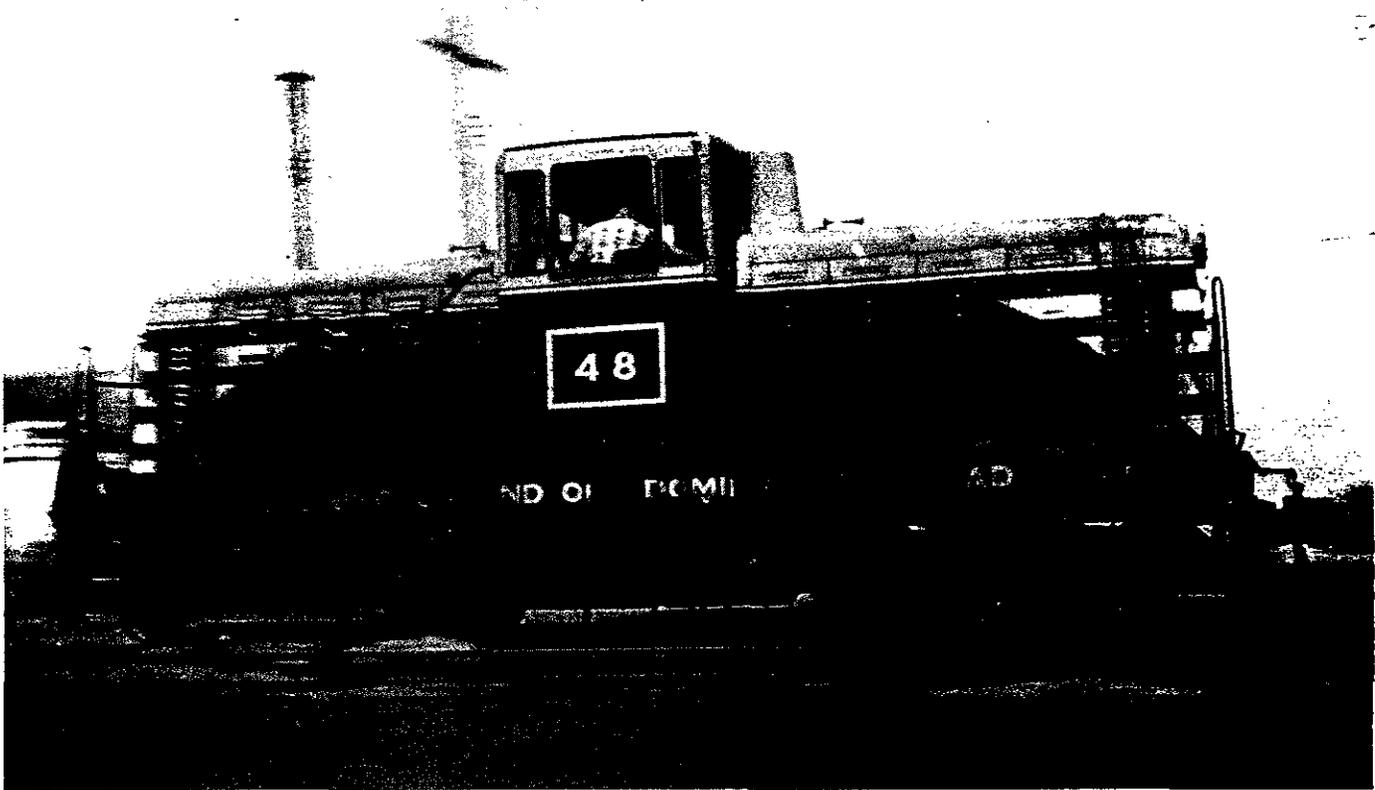
But the wartime boom brought back Baggett's old bugaboo too. Some Loudoun and Fairfax County residents had never really reconciled themselves to the end of W&OD passenger service, and gasoline and tire rationing gave them back their cause. Needless to say, Nellie Fletcher swooped back to demand reinstatement of the trains. Thanks to the railroad's proximity to Washington and the homes of many government officials, politics and publicity pushed the inconspicuous little freight hauler into a glaring limelight. Local newspapers leaped enthusiastically into the fray, and Mrs. Fletcher and her cohorts put pressure on the conveniently close Federal agencies. In 1943 the company grudgingly agreed to resume service.

It was easier said than done. The electric wires were gone over most of the line, as were all the operable cars. Hard-pressed by the crush of wartime business, other railroads could spare little or nothing. With help from the Office of Defense Transportation, the W&OD did its best to scratch up some self-propelled passenger cars and came up with a scraggly assortment of equipment nobody else seemed to want.

First to arrive on lease was an two-car gas-electric

powered streamliner built by the Budd Company in 1932 for the Pennsylvania Railroad. Sleek-looking with fluted stainless steel sides (covered with tuscan red paint) the train was originally one of a small group of experimental lightweight motor trains equipped with Michelin-patent rubber tires. The unorthodox running gear had since been replaced with conventional steel wheels; the Pennsylvania also had substituted a single 190 hp Lycoming gasoline engine and small 28 hp auxiliary for the original pair of 125 hp Cummins diesels. But nothing helped; the train was still a troublesome eccentric, unreliable and seriously underpowered for the W&OD's rolling Piedmont terrain. (More often than not it had to be pushed up the 3.5 per cent westbound grade out of Rosslyn by a diesel or electric locomotive.) Making the best of it, the W&OD repainted the train in the black, grey, and white scheme introduced by the GE diesels and bravely began service in March 1943 with a single commuter round trip between Rosslyn and Leesburg.

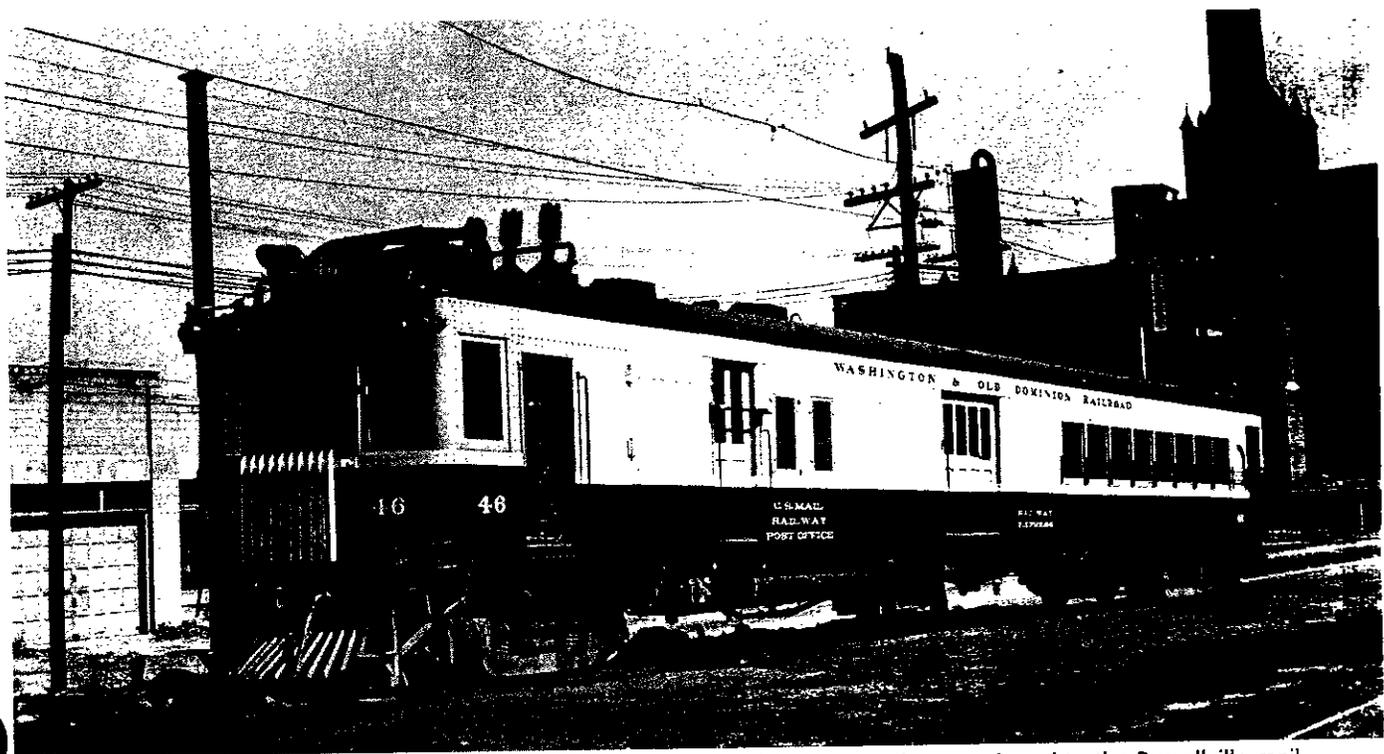
As expected, the new train quickly became the despair of the railroad and the delight of local newspapers looking for quaint material to divert their war-weary readers. Shortly after service started the *Washington Post* gleefully reported: "It goes downhill with a delirious roar, sparks flying, engines wide open. But uphill...it struggles, with asthmatic engines...and just about makes the grade. A pretentious looking



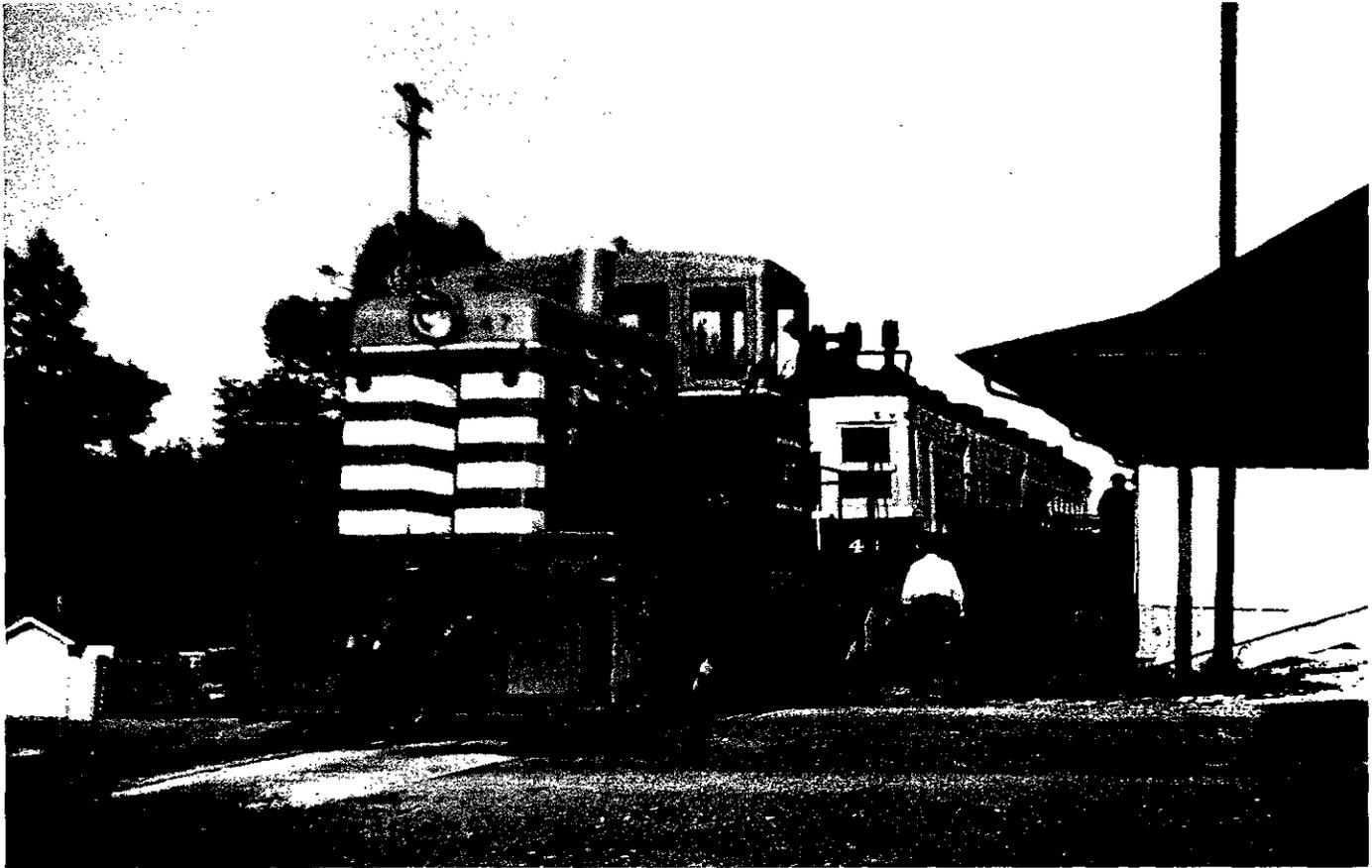
At rest or on the move, the W&OD's GE 44-tonners always seemed to look larger and more impressive than they really were. Both scenes are at Rosslyn in 1946. (No. 48 by M. M. Duffy; 49 by H. H. Harwood, Jr.)



The reincarnated passenger service began inauspiciously with this trouble-prone experimental streamlined motor train leased from the Pennsylvania Railroad. It has just arrived in Leesburg on an early July evening in 1943. Doubtless the commuters on board are happy to be home without major incident. (L. W. Rice)



The next secondhand motor car acquisition, No. 46, had railway mail facilities and was assigned to the Purcellville mail trips handled by the ex-electric car 44. Sadly, it too was no bargain and permanently broke down shortly after delivery; afterward it was hauled by a diesel. (L. W. Rice)



Diesel 47 and nonfunctioning motor car 46 have arrived at Purcellville in August 1946. Although geared for low-speed freight work, the little diesels seemed to have no problems keeping the leisurely passenger schedule. (H. H. Harwood, Jr.)

vehicle with suave modern lines...it constantly breaks down in the middle of a trip. everybody looks around for the trouble while the engineer hops out and ties the thing together, or puts the wheels back on the rails. The train gets under way again and the passengers go back to their papers or naps.”

Doubtless the writer got a bit too carried away, but perhaps that too was fitting for the Washington & Old Dominion. Under old John R. McLean, the *Washington Post* was notorious for creative reporting.

As all this was going on, the two Rosslyn-Purcellville mail and express runs had continued on their old schedules, with the old interurban mail-express car now stripped of its electrical equipment and hauled by one of the General Electric diesels. With the diesel needed for freight, and continuing pressures to expand the passenger service, Baggett decided to replace the train with self-propelled equipment and re-admit riders. Later in 1943 he gathered in another orphan from the Gulf, Mobile & Ohio Railroad, a more conventional gas-electric car originally built in 1926 and equipped with Rail-

way Post Office and baggage-express compartments plus seats for 40 passengers. Numbered W&OD 46, this newcomer unfortunately developed an unrepairable problem almost immediately and the diesel had to be called back to haul it dead over its assigned runs.

Two other gas-electric hand-me-downs arrived from the New York Central Railroad to round out the W&OD's new passenger roster. One, W&OD No. 45, was a 1928 passenger-baggage combine with Mack gasoline engines and replaced the sickly leased two-car Pennsylvania streamliner on the Leesburg commuter trips. (Subsequently the W&OD bought the Pennsy train but never used it again.) The last, W&OD No. 52, came in 1944. A heavy Brill-built (also in 1928) combination Railway Post Office-express-passenger combine, it took over most of the Rosslyn-Purcellville trips from the nonfunctioning No. 46. No. 46 was kept around, however, and filled in when the other two gas-electrics were ailing or in for regular maintenance. Both the 45 and 52 were repowered with more reliable Cummins diesel engines in 1946.



Diesel-hauled No. 46 loads for its early afternoon Purcellville run at the Rosslyn "station"— which merely consisted of the overhanging roof of the shop. (H. H. Harwood, Jr.)

The reincarnated passenger service did reasonably well for itself for a while. In 1945 passenger revenues totaled \$24,984; with \$20,754 added from mail and express, it was the best performance since 1937. The new service was strictly a low-overhead operation. No tickets were sold (conductors took cash and gave receipts), crews did without formal uniforms, and only a few stations were left to shelter passengers. At the Rosslyn terminal, cars loaded on a storage siding and

the only "station" was the overhanging car shop roof. Schedules were leisurely as always; the 45 mile trip between Rosslyn and Purcellville was accomplished in two hours and 20 minutes at an average speed of 20 mph.

But the one-car "trains" were charming too, and offered a refreshing refuge from the hurlyburly of wartime Washington as they chugged through the pleasant rural countryside, stopping at nameless crossroads and waiting for regular passengers to show up.



Former New York Central motor car 52 running as train No. 4, the morning Purcellville-Rosslyn mail run, stops at Bluemont Junction in June 1945. The tiny former passenger station housed the W&OD's dispatcher; the adjacent brick building was a former electric substation, then used for storage. (L. W. Rice)

And more than one Washington-area railroad enthusiast was nurtured on the railroad's casual, friendly ways and its unique and historic equipment.

With finances now more stable, Elkins and Baggett decided to end the Southern Railway lease and buy the 47-mile Potomac Yard-Purcellville line outright. In 1945 the Southern took \$70,000 for its former branch and the W&OD could finally call its railroad its own—and at a bargain price. In 1916 the Alexandria-Bluemont line was officially valued at \$1.9 million.

The war's end brought the end of the passenger service "emergency", and patronage again sloped off steeply. By 1949 revenue from passengers was less than half the 1945 figure and in 1950 it amounted to only \$6,678. The Leesburg commuter trip was dropped in June 1950, but the two daily Purcellville runs continued as long as the company kept its \$17,000-a-year mail contract.

But in 1951 the Post Office went through one of its periodic modernization upheavals and switched all short-haul mail routes to truck. May 31st would mark

the end of the Washington & Old Dominion's mail contract and the simultaneous end of all passenger service—again.

As the last day approached the railroad found itself engulfed in another orgy of publicity. A favorite with the press since the Nellie Fletcher days and now viewed as a quaint vestige of times past, the Old Dominion blossomed forth in a succession of human interest and "atmosphere" stories. The two surviving passenger motor cars—naturally dubbed "old 45" and "old 52" by condescending reporters—were recorded in minute detail as they went about their jobs. And of course they provided good copy; such extracurricular antics as stopping for cows, breaking down, or helping to clear up minor freight derailments delighted readers and writers alike. Engineer Foster Ormsby and conductor John Kelly were photographed from every conceivable angle and spread across the pages of local papers. National radio personality Arthur Godfrey came up with a Nellie Fletcher-like hyperbole and grumbled over the air that supplies to his home near Leesburg would be cut off if



Purcellville-bound No. 52 makes an impressive sight as it rumbles over the Lee Highway bridge at Thrifton, east of Cherrydale, in early 1949. Just behind the car was the onetime junction with the Great Falls Division. (*H. H. Harwood, Jr.*)

the trains disappeared. And true to form Mrs. Fletcher herself fired off protests to the Post Office Department and the Virginia Corporation Commission.

But this time nobody paid attention. May 31st came and took with it the last Old Dominion passenger train. No. 45 had the honor, and both surviving cars were scrapped soon after.

The freight business continued in flourishing health, however. Suburban home and office building in suburban Arlington intensified, and the three original GE 44-ton diesels were soon overwhelmed with work. During 1945 and 1946 Baggett found himself with a power shortage and leased several Army diesels on a short-term basis to provide more horsepower and allow shop time for his overworked 44-tonners. (Even so, everything was needed. This author documented one of the GE's switching in Rosslyn minus one hood

and engine while the shop awaited the engine replacement.) He solved the problem with two 600 hp Whitcomb-built units bought secondhand from the War Assets Administration in 1946 and 1947. These curious humpbacked creatures had been built for U. S. Army service overseas and originally equipped with buffers and other foreign appliances, but were returned to the U. S. without seeing service.

Another bargain diesel arrived in 1950, a 660 hp unit of an offbeat design built in 1948 for the Canadian National but rejected and sent to Whitcomb for rebuilding and resale. More new power came afterward. A conventional 70-ton 600 hp General Electric diesel was delivered in 1951 and an identical mate was bought five years later. The W&OD's first diesels with multiple-unit controls, they could be coupled together to produce 1200 hp, which was increasingly needed.

**WASHINGTON AND OLD DOMINION RAILROAD**

Time Table No. A-10

Effective 12.01 A.M. (Eastern War Time) Monday, January 31, 1944

(Cancels Time Table No. A-9)

For the Government of Employees Only

**DAILY EXCEPT SUNDAYS**

**G. C. BAGGETT**  
Vice-President and  
General Manager

**BETWEEN ROSSLYN AND PURCELLVILLE**

**J. M. McLANEY**  
Chief Dispatcher

WESTBOUND TRAINS			Miles from Rosslyn	STATIONS		Station Numbers	EASTBOUND TRAINS			Minimum Time bet. Stations Frt. Trains
First Class							First Class			
3	5	1					2	4	8	
P.M. 6.05	P.M. 1.55	A.M. 6.15	.0	Lv. —	Ar. —	1	A.M. 7.40	A.M. 11.05	P.M. 7.24	7
f6.10	f2.01	f6.20	1.5	—	—	2	f7.35	f10.59	f7.18	13
f6.23	f2.11	f6.28	4.5	—	—	5	f7.22	f10.50	f7.09	
f6.28	f2.16	f6.35	6.5	—	—	7	s7.17	s10.45	s7.04	7
f6.34	f2.22	f6.39	7.7	—	—	8	f7.11	f10.40	f6.59	4
f6.39	f2.28	f6.45	9.8	—	—	10	f7.06	f10.34	f6.53	7
f6.42	f2.30	f6.47	10.8	—	—	11	f7.02	f10.32	f6.51	3
f6.46 <sup>s</sup>	f2.37	f6.56 <sup>s</sup>	12.4	—	—	13	f6.56 <sup>s</sup>	f10.27	f6.46 <sup>s</sup>	5
f6.54	f2.45	s7.05	15.3	—	—	16	s6.49	f10.19	f6.39	9
f7.03	f2.55	f7.13	18.4	—	—	18	f6.40	f10.09	f6.31	10
s7.10	f3.01	f7.20	20.6	—	—	21	s6.35	s10.03	s6.25	7
f7.19	f3.11	f7.30	24.1	—	—	25	f6.25	f9.54	f6.13	11
f7.30	s3.22	f7.39	28.1	—	—	29	f6.15	f9.42	f6.03	12
f7.35	f3.27	f7.44	30.1	—	—	32	f6.10	f9.37	f5.58	7
7.45	s3.40	s7.58	34.7	—	—	35	6.00	s9.27	s5.48	14
P.M.	f3.52	f8.13	38.4	—	—	39	A.M.	f9.12	f5.35	11
—	f3.55	f8.16	39.2	—	—	40	—	f9.10	f5.33	3
—	f4.00	f8.21	41.0	—	—	41	—	f9.04	f5.28	6
—	4.15 <sup>s</sup>	8.32 <sup>4</sup>	44.6	—	—	45	—	8.55 <sup>1</sup>	5.20	12
P.M.	P.M.	A.M.		Ar.	Lv.		A.M.	A.M.	P.M.	
3	5	1					2	4	8	

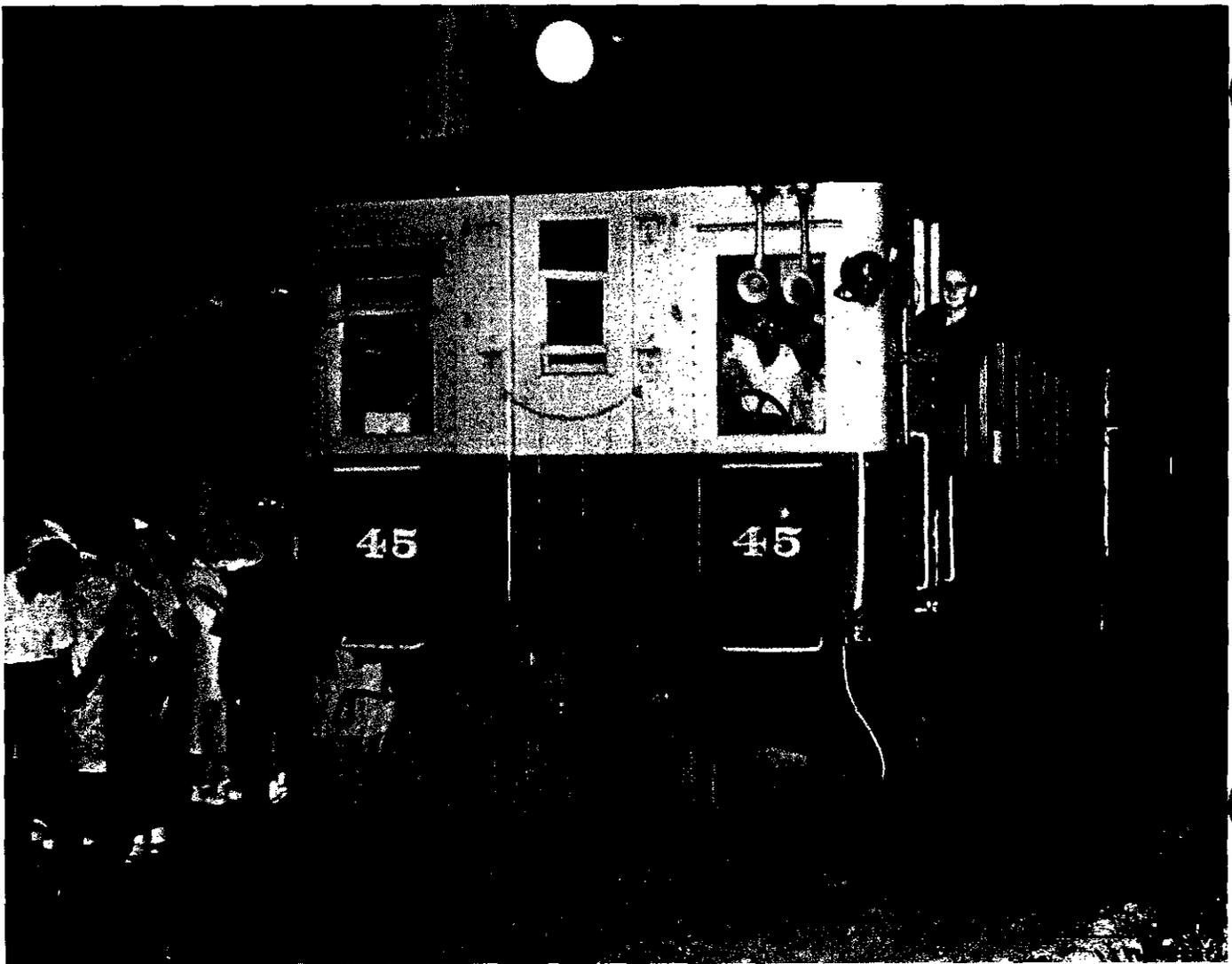
This 1944 timetable was typical of the W&OD's wartime and postwar passenger services. Trains 2 and 3 were all-passenger commuter runs, usually handled by car 45; car 52 normally operated the four Purcellville trains, which handled mail and express as well as passengers



Newly acquired ex-Army diesel 54 trundles a short freight east through Vienna in 1947. (*H. H. Harwood, Jr.*)



On May 31, 1951 — the last day of W&OD passenger service—eastbound motor car 45 obediently takes the siding at Trap Rock quarry, east of Leesburg, to let a westbound freight past. (*E. S. Miller*)



The end. Car 45 on its last passenger run gets a rousing, full-capacity farewell at Falls Church as it struggles toward Rosslyn early in the evening of May 31, 1951. (*Ara Mesrobian*)

As the heavier power slowly filtered in, the three little original GE workhorses were sold off serially between 1948 and 1951 and one of the two ex-Army units left in 1952. All found homes elsewhere, either on other short lines or with construction contractors.

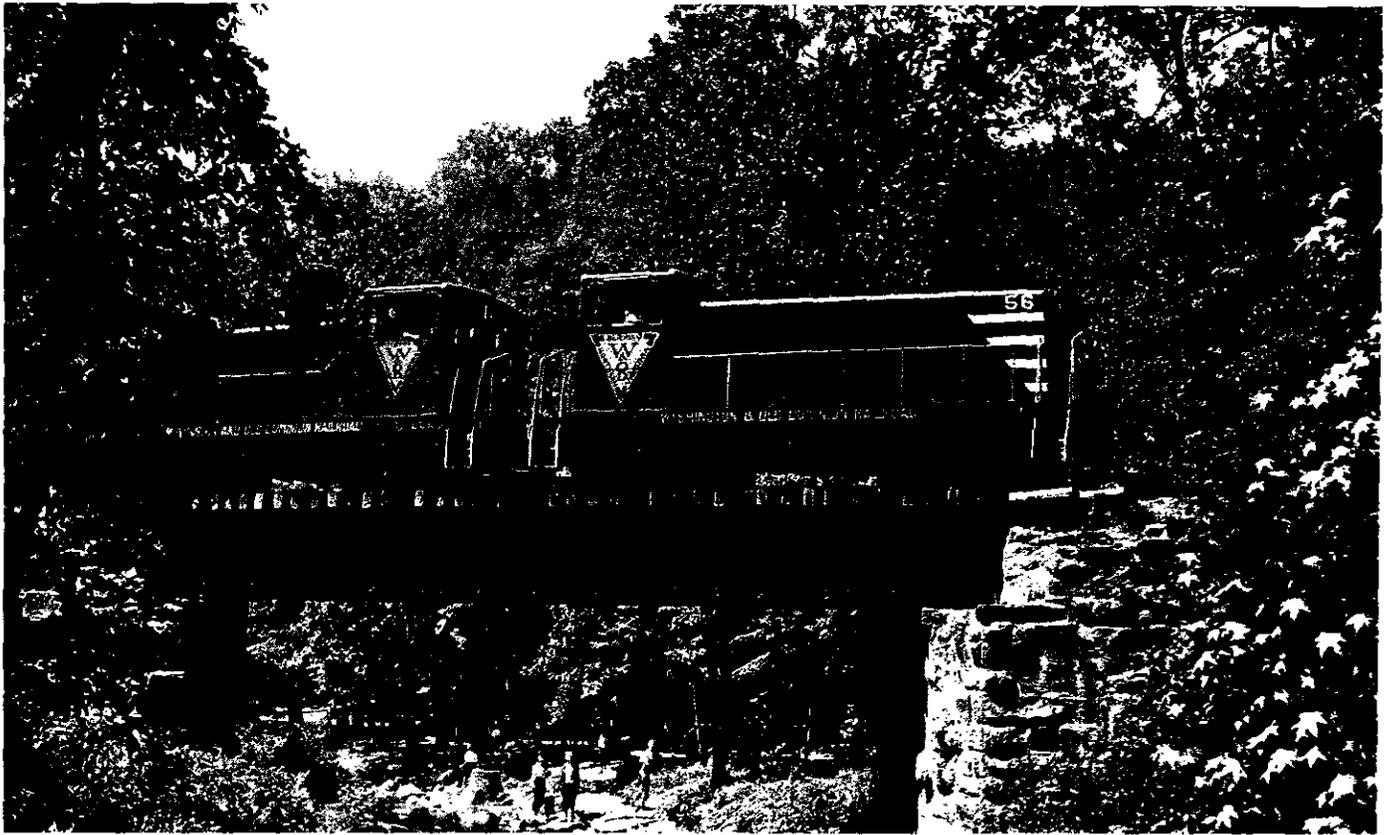
A new color scheme also appeared in the late 1940s as black and yellow replaced the black, grey, and white introduced by the first diesel in 1941. Both operable passenger motor cars served out their last several years in the more colorful (and visible) combination. Attempting to project a modern image the railroad also adopted its first logo in 1950, a triangular design enclosing the W&OD initials with the motto "Serving Northern Virginia."

In 1950 the W&OD became a one of the earliest railroads to replace its traditional telephone dispatching and

communication system with radio. In its case the move was partly dictated by its rapidly deteriorating lineside wire system, but the new system proved invaluable to dispatchers and crews who could now communicate with one another at all times rather than relying on trackside telephones and station agents.

Solvency and a lean organization did not entirely obliterate the W&OD's oldtime nonchalance. Witness this memorandum from General Manager Baggett to the chief dispatcher in 1949, when passenger trains were still running:

"Mr. McLaney: Train No. 2 has been leaving Leesburg behind time and apparently catches up with its schedule before it reaches Vienna. This subjects passengers along the line to unnecessary delays and should be corrected.



Youngsters playing in Glencarlyn Park pause to watch the W&OD's pair of GE 70-tonners grind uphill from Potomac Yard heading for Bluemont Junction in 1960. (David Marcham)

It is reported to me that the reason for the delay is that conductor Rives is not on hand when the train is scheduled to leave...Beginning at once will you please see that train No. 2 leaves Leesburg on time, even if it is necessary to leave conductor Rives behind. Flagman Lee has been furnished with proper equipment and should be used in place of conductor Rives whenever necessary."

Or this note from the company treasurer to the general manager in 1956 reporting a theft:

"Someone broke into the Purcellville station over the weekend. Mr. Carneal (the agent) had four or five dollars in the old safe.

The safe was always kept open because no one knew the combination. The thief locked the safe, therefore Carneal could not tell if anything was missing...

I instructed Carneal to report the theft to the Town Sergeant, also have Mr. Houchins look at the safe to see if he could get same open." And in typical short line tradition, W&OD labor

policies paid scant attention to job and craft distinctions. Train crews usually came up from the maintenance of way ranks and were generally expected to perform all jobs in between. One employee in the late 1950s was simultaneously on call as trainman, engineer, conductor, and bulldozer operator.

By the early 1950s the people who had nursed the railroad through its worst years were aging and ready to move on. George Baggett retired March 1, 1952 at age 70, leaving a relatively prosperous property that he had largely created. Continuing the W&OD's tradition of picking its general managers from the sales and pricing side of the business, Baggett found Neil Lantzy, a young and energetic freight traffic man from the Bessemer & Lake Erie Railroad. Davis Elkins continued a while longer as sole owner and titular head of the company. But by 1955 he was nearing 80, and after 44 years of struggling with his father's co-creation he finally decided it was time to sell out. Lantzy was dispatched in search of a buyer and came up with a surprising one that would change the W&OD's course yet again, this time with finality.

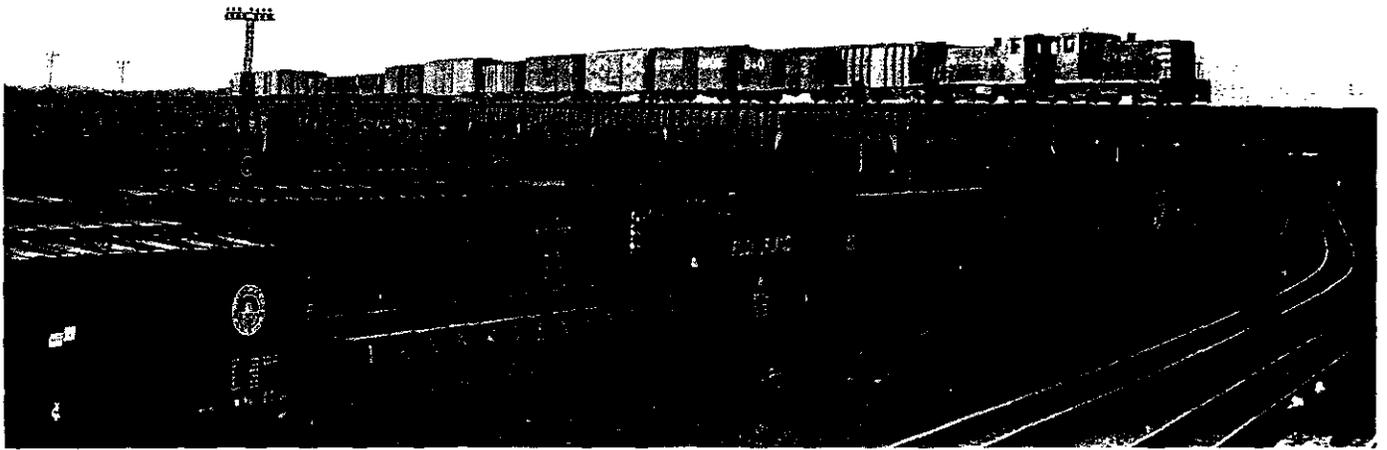


While switching outside Rosslyn, engineer Douglas Lee watches intently for signals from his brakeman as conductor Chidester supervises. (H. H. Harwood, Jr.)



On their way westward, the crew of a W&OD freight make a cautious approach to the ancient iron truss bridge over Difficult Run, near Hunter's station. (H. H. Harwood, Jr.)

1956 - 1968



On a late June afternoon in 1958 GE 70-tonners 56 and 57 roll 21 cars over the long Potomac Yard trestle for interchange to the five Class I railroads using the yard. (*H. H. Harwood, Jr.*)

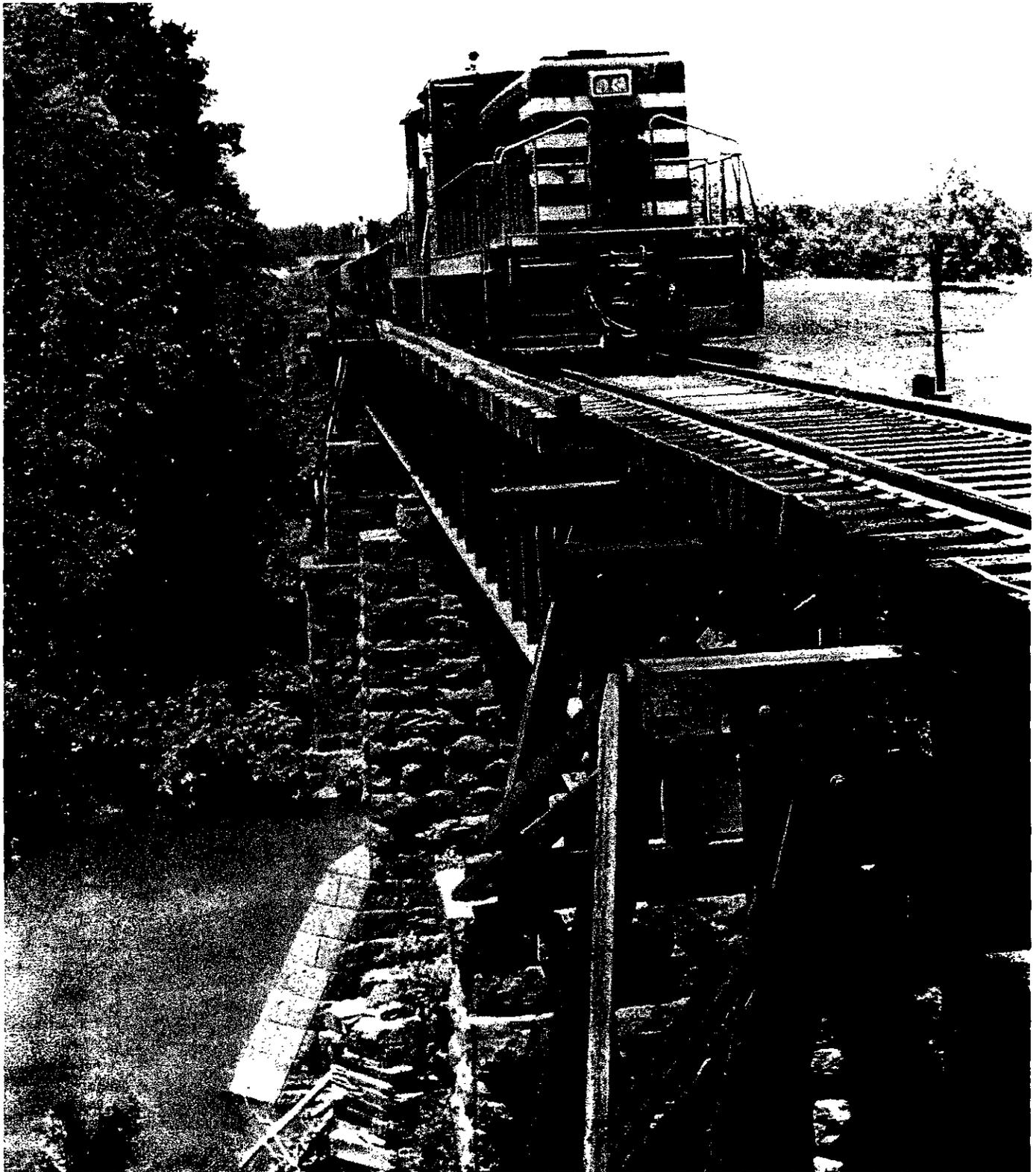
Of all the Washington & Old Dominion's possible buyers, the Chesapeake & Ohio Railway was the unlikeliest. Although it was one of the W&OD's five freight connections at Potomac Yard, it had the least amount of interchange business—nor was that business very profitable to the C&O. Traditionally the big 5100-mile-long coal hauler had very little interest in northern Virginia local traffic; in fact its own tracks ended at Orange, Virginia, 80 miles south, where C&O freights joined the Southern Railway's main line to reach Potomac Yard. So why would it want this marginal short line on the fringe of its system?

The answer was the tantalizing promise of a large coal movement, the C&O's specialty. Washington's Potomac Electric Power Company (PEPCO) planned to build a high-capacity coal-fired power plant on the Virginia side of the Potomac north of Sterling, less than

five miles from the W&OD. The plant was to take 60 carloads of coal a day or more—obviously a fat new customer for C&O-served mines and a profitable long haul for the railroad. In a way it would be the belated consummation of the railroad's 19th century dreams.

On November 2, 1956, the Chesapeake & Ohio officially took full control of the Washington & Old Dominion. For his railroad, Davis Elkins received 6870 shares of C&O stock, worth about \$450,000 at the time of sale—a nice profit on his 1936 investment of \$35,000. (But of course his father's estate had probably lost more on the ailing railroad years before.)

Sadly for the C&O, however, the vision of coal drags rolling into the Loudoun pastureland once again vaporized. The PEPCO power plant proposal got caught in a three-way political tangle among the states of Virginia and Maryland, both of which wanted it, and local



Next to the Potomac Yard trestle, the combination wood trestle and girder bridge spanning Goose Creek, east of Leesburg, was the W&OD's highest and longest. The train is eastbound in mid-1958. (*H. H. Harwood, Jr.*)



Crews exchange power and trains at Falls Church in June 1958. Oddball diesel No. 55 (at left) has come down from Rosslyn; the pair of GE 70-tonners headed by 56 has brought interchange cars from Potomac Yard and will continue west to Purcellville. (H. H. Harwood, Jr.)

authorities who did not. Maryland finally won out, and the plant was eventually built at Dickerson, on the Potomac's north side and close to the Baltimore & Ohio's main line. (The site of the stillborn Virginia plant—which PEPCO had already acquired—later became Algonkian Regional Park.)

But for a while at least, things were far from bad. Since the short line's wage scales were lower than the C&O's and its work rules considerably more liberal, the new parent avoided a corporate merger. The W&OD maintained its name, Neil Lantzy remained general manager, and the line's four black-and-yellow diesels continued carrying the freight. Lantzy left in 1959, however, following the perhaps inevitable differences with C&O's large-corporation management style. Afterward the C&O used the small railroad as a training ground for its younger operating officers, and successively sent James R. Cary, Earl F. Hogan, and Albert W. Dudley to serve as its superintendents. C&O

sales, industrial development, and engineering people also helped where needed.

The C&O's arrival on the scene coincided with what turned out to be the biggest bonanza of the W&OD's career, and fortunately, C&O cash and materials were made available to take advantage of it.

At the time of the C&O's purchase the Federal government had picked a large piece of relatively flat farmland several miles south of the Old Dominion's Sterling station to become Dulles International Airport. Suddenly the low-pressure railroad found itself catapulted into the jet age, or at least its stone and concrete foundations. As the nearest railroad to the massive construction job it stood in line to haul in much of the material—if it could physically do so.

But in 1956 it could not. The line's four diesels averaged only 600 hp each and weighed between 65 and 75 tons, hardly adequate for truly heavy tonnages. (As noted earlier, the two 70-ton GE's could run together



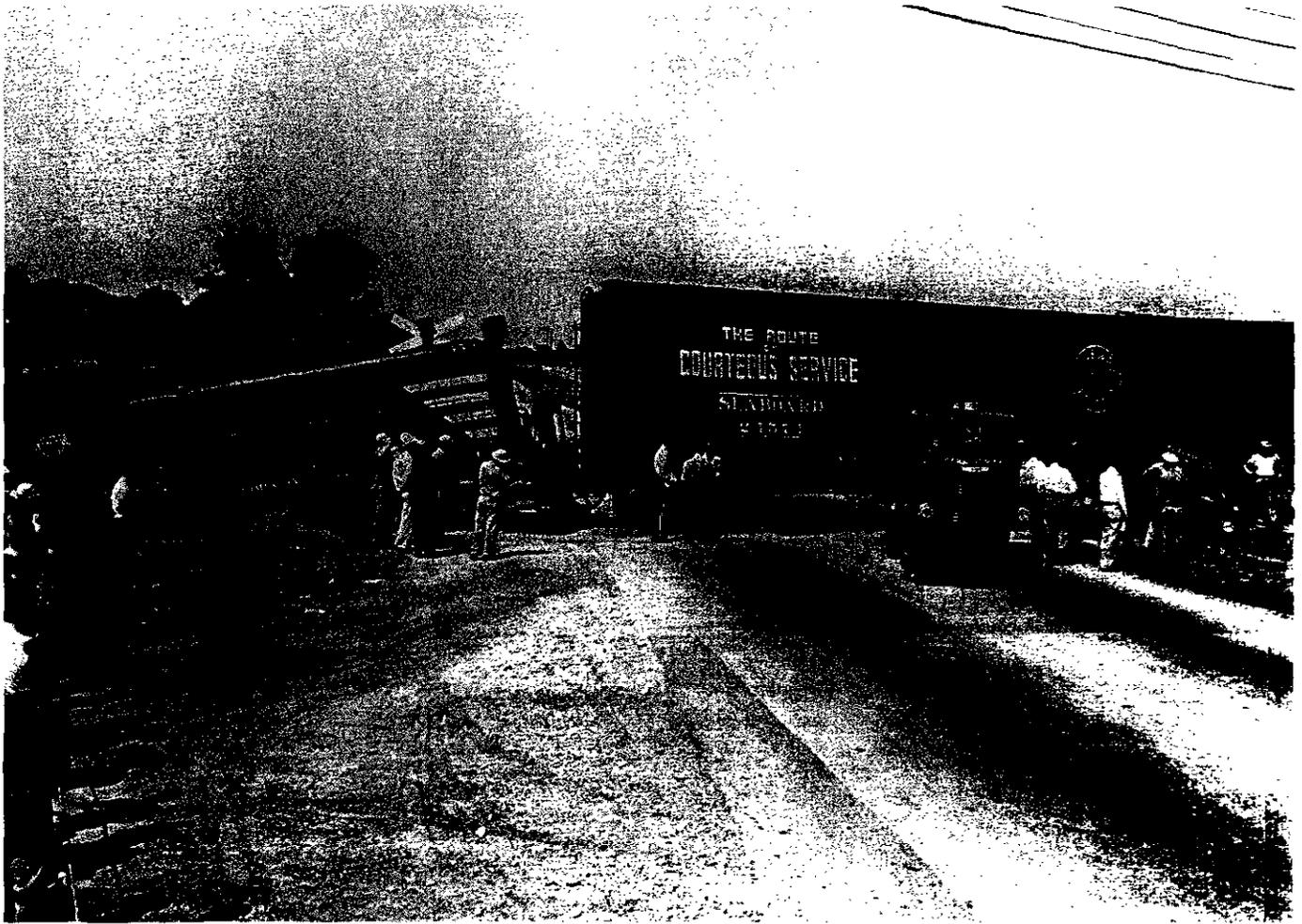
The fragile 1880s-era Difficult Run truss bridge near Hunter's station was an antiquarian's delight and an operating curse. A westbound freight has throttled down to the required 10 mph while its crew hopes for the best. Soon after this 1958 scene it was replaced by a heavy girder span from the C&O. (H. H. Harwood, Jr.)

produce 1200 hp, but the other two could not.) Adequate or not, they were the heaviest power the line could practically take. Rail, ties, and especially the numerous bridges were generally not up to much more than 80 tons at best, (The worst example was the 1884 iron truss bridge over Difficult Run, east of Hunter's station, which had an axle loading of about 15 tons and a 10 mph speed limit.)

The C&O saw not only the immediate airport traffic but some long-range industrial development potential in the area and decided to upgrade the W&OD's eastern end for 100-ton loads. Beginning in 1957 it shipped in heavier used rail, ties, and tieplates. Between 1958 and 1960 some 13 bridges between Potomac Yard and Sterling were replaced, primarily the multiple crossings of meandering Four Mile Run. Difficult Run was difficult indeed, since it was in a swampy spot inaccessible for any kind of highway equipment. The ancient truss bridge's successor was far less picturesque but

surely would support anything the W&OD had to offer—it was originally intended as a locomotive turntable at Hinton, West Virginia, and was designed for C&O's massive 385-ton 2-6-6-6 "Allegheny" articulateds.

After the bridges came heavier diesel power. C&O sent up several 1000 hp Alco-built switchers from its Clifton Forge and Richmond yards to take over operations on the upgraded eastern end of the line. The C&O units were the ultimate in brawn, if not cleanliness; coupled in multiples of two or three, they could churn out up to 3000 hp. Usually two or three of the leased C&O Alcos were kept at Potomac Yard to work the line as far west as Herndon or Sterling, where a siding had been built to unload airport construction materials. Little work had been done west of Sterling and that territory remained the province of the W&OD's own power. Its two GE 70-tonners were based at the former Leesburg freight station to handle business in the line's west end, and the two trains



As Washington's northern Virginia suburbs rapidly developed, highway grade crossings became a major safety problem. With only two exceptions, none of the W&OD's crossings were protected by automatic signals. One exception was the Shirley Highway in Arlington, which also was the only rail grade crossing on the national Interstate system. Unhappily, warning signals sometimes had little effect, as this tangle with a speeding truck attests. (David Marcham)

generally met at Herndon to exchange cars. The last of the former Army units was sold in 1959 and the odd Whitcomb rebuild, No. 55, was kept as a theoretical spare. It seldom, if ever, ran.

Thanks to the airport work and continued heavy Trap Rock stone business, 1959 was the best year the Washington & Old Dominion ever had—or ever would have. C&O and W&OD diesels toted 11,464 carloads, more than double the traffic of 1940 when Baggett reported his first tiny profit. Gross revenues totaled \$668,114 and net income hit an all-time high of \$46,012.

Much bigger money was also in the offing, although unfortunately not from running a railroad. In planning new Interstate Route 66's Washington entry the highway engineers decided to use the upper half of the Rosslyn branch, including the land occupied by the old Rosslyn shop and yard. In all, 2.9 miles of the Rosslyn

branch between Rosslyn and Washington Boulevard were condemned, which included the last surviving stretch of the Great Falls & Old Dominion. Thanks to skyrocketing land values in Arlington County the W&OD received \$900,000 for the short segment. The right-of-way was vacated in 1963, although it sat idle with bridges, ties, and even some rail intact for another six years awaiting Interstate 66 construction.

As a byproduct of the Rosslyn abandonment the Old Dominion also received modern office and shop buildings, its newest structures since 1923. The highway project also obliterated central Rosslyn, not a catastrophic loss, but in the process it removed the nondescript commercial building on North Moore Street which housed the railroad's offices. A new home was built in a wooded residential development near the track at Bluemont Junction—and "home" is literally what it was. To conform to



Ostensibly a suburban home, this was the W&OD's office building after eviction from Rosslyn in 1963. Located in a residential development adjacent to Bluemont Junction, it looked out at the track which can be seen in the background. After the railroad's demise it became a real house. (H. H. Harwood, Jr.)

its neighbors, the office structure was built as an ordinary two-story suburban house, with shutters on the outside and a cozy fireplace in the superintendent's office within. To replace the onetime interurban shop, the highway department paid for a single-track steel structure at the Potomac Yard interchange.

The Rosslyn branch sale was a happy windfall, but it was also a clear symptom of the railroad's fate. Here was a single-track 19th century rural railroad line sitting in the middle of what was becoming one of the country's most intensively developed and high-value suburban areas. Increasingly, it appeared to be an irrelevant and perhaps incompatible anachronism in the very territory it had helped create.

There was no more dramatic example than the terrifying spot where the railroad crossed the Shirley Highway (Interstate 395) at grade—the only railroad grade crossing on the Interstate Highway system. The expressway was one of the busiest traffic funnels into

Washington and the W&OD's daily freight runs coincided beautifully with the morning and afternoon rush hours. Masses of cars and trucks doing 60 mph on what was supposed to be a limited-access highway suddenly found themselves facing a string of freight cars creeping across the road. Train crews were surely no happier venturing across this high-speed wall of metal, and at least once a W&OD diesel was knocked cleanly off the track.

So increasingly, people along the line wondered how long it would be before their little railroad went the way of so many other old northern Virginia landmarks. As it turned out, they had little time to wonder.

On February 5, 1965, the Washington & Old Dominion formally filed an application with the Interstate Commerce Commission to abandon its entire line. At the same time it was announced that the Virginia Department of Highways would buy most of the property for \$3.5 million in order to use a two-mile stretch of



The old Rosslyn shop's replacement was this small, bleakly utilitarian structure located just east of Potomac Yard in Alexandria. Generally the heavier leased C&O Alco switchers were based here while a pair of the W&OD's own units were kept at Leesburg. The camera looks east along the original AL&H line into Alexandria, a portion of which still operated in 2000. (*H. H. Harwood, Jr.*)

right-of-way through Falls Church for Interstate 66. Although not publicized at the time, the highway department made an agreement with the Virginia Electric Power Company (VEPCO) to re-sell the balance of the rail line to use for its power transmission lines.

Everyone was shocked at the suddenness, but nobody was really surprised. For at least six years there had been intermittent talk about condemning parts of the railroad for highway use. In fact, in 1960 the Virginia General Assembly passed a bill allowing its highway department to buy the entire line. But after some fruitless negotiations with the C&O and strong opposition from a newly formed group of Old Dominion freight customers, the idea died in early 1962. In mid-1964 it popped up again, however, and after more intense dickering with the C&O (which originally asked \$11 million) the two parties settled on the \$3.5 million price and signed their contract late that year.

ICC Examiner James F. Perrin opened public hearings May 18, 1965, and from the start it was clear that this was going to be anything but a routine branch-line abandonment case. By the time it was over—three years later—it had turned into the most controversial and voluminous such case the Interstate Commerce

Commission ever handled. It seemed as if almost everyone in northern Virginia rose to the railroad's defense—freight customers, cities and counties along the line, real estate developers, public agencies, railroad enthusiasts, and miscellaneous interested individuals. Motives were mixed, of course, ranging from pragmatic businessmen who saw their investments jeopardized, to people who simply could not conceive of a world without the Washington & Old Dominion.

On the other hand the railroad hardly wanted to be saved by anyone. The C&O stood to get \$3.5 million (added to the \$900,000 from the Rosslyn branch sale) for its original \$450,000 investment. The highway planners calculated that they would save about \$5.4 million by using the right-of-way through Falls Church and saving on other railroad-related expenses such as a separated crossing at the Shirley Highway. In contrast, the railroad's business was once again declining; its airport traffic had tapered off, and it was also finding that suburban zoning restrictions were seriously hampering the establishment of new on-line industries. Operating costs were climbing and, according to the C&O, it had accumulated a total deficit of \$205,000 over the preceding five years. C&O also claimed that \$11 million would



In the last several years of operation, crews based at Potomac Yard and at Leesburg would meet at Herndon to exchange cars. In April 1967 W&OD units 57 and 58 (at right) wait for C&O No. 9160 to clear before heading back west. (H. H. Harwood, Jr.)

be needed to rehabilitate the line. All these figures were debatable—and they certainly were debated—but the blunt truth was that the W&OD was far more valuable dead than alive.

Be that as it may, the case rumbled on, with all of the customary arguments about the effects on existing railroad customers, the accuracy of everyone's cost figures, the C&O's dubious financial treatment of its offspring, the stultifying effect on area industrial development—especially in Loudoun County—and alternative proposals. After hearing 19 days' worth of often heated testimony and slogging through some 4000 pages of the transcript, ICC Examiner Perrin filed his report on March 7, 1966. He recommended that the line be abandoned with no strings attached.

That merely began a new round. Five different opposition groups had the case re-opened for more testimony. In July 1967 the newly formed Washington Metropolitan Transit Authority also jumped in and asked for a delay while it studied the railroad's role in future rapid transit corridors.

In the meantime the C&O was not above pulling a legal dirty trick to speed things along. By then about 40 per cent of the railroad's traffic came from the Arlington Stone Company quarry at Trap Rock, destined for various road and other construction projects in northern Virginia. Since this business moved strictly within the state, the railroad lawyers went through the Virginia Corporation Commission and the Virginia Supreme Court of Appeals for clearance to cancel its intrastate tariffs. Final permission came in June 1967 and afterward business predictably dropped by almost half.

After another flurry of postponement requests, the full Interstate Commerce Commission finally issued its formal decision on January 23, 1968. Essentially it upheld its examiner and allowed the abandonment, although it specified employee protection and assumed that the transit agency was satisfied that it could use parts of the line for rapid transit later. January 30th was set as the date the Washington & Old Dominion could die.

It did not. Twelve hours before the Commission's order took effect the W&OD User's Association



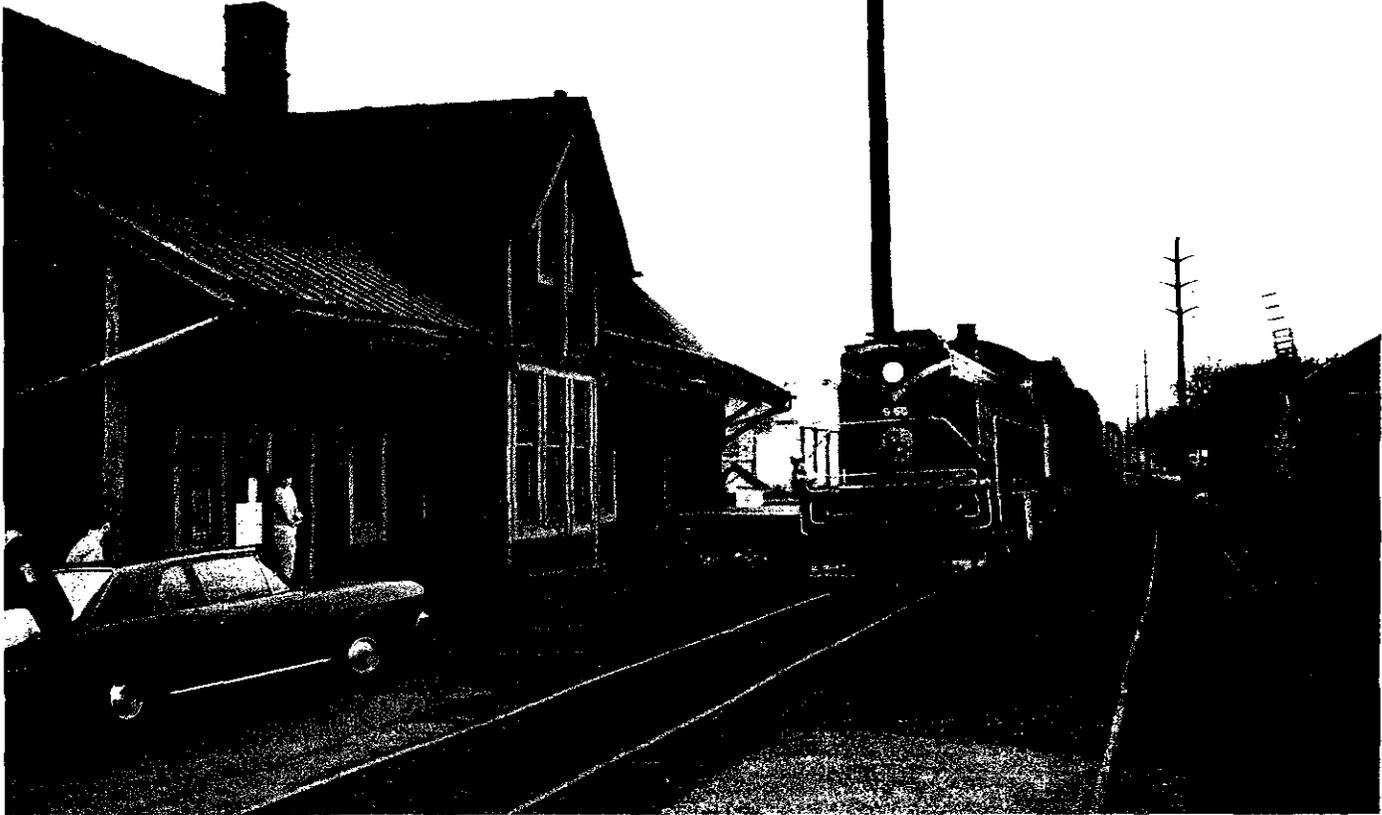
Decline was already evident in 1959 when a pair of the new parent's unwashed Alco switchers heads west on weed-choked track past the unpainted Vienna station. (*David Marcham*)

emerged from Federal court in Alexandria with a temporary restraining order, while the court pondered an appeal. Everyone heaved a sigh and the case started all over again.

As the lawyers argued and delayed, the railroad itself was literally falling apart. Its physical condition had been sadly slipping since the early 1960s and now only the most necessary work was being done. The remaining old frame stations buildings—which even during the gloomy 1930s had been kept painted in bright yellow with white trim—were now incredibly shabby. (The Falls Church station was such an eyesore that the city itself had it repainted.) When one of the 70-ton GE diesels broke a crankshaft in 1966 the company traded it to a used locomotive dealer for a small ex-Pennsylvania Railroad GE 44-tonner rather than repair it.

With the end of the Trap Rock stone movements in mid-1967 the railroad laid off one of its two operating crews; the remaining crew, based at Potomac Yard, ventured out on the line's west end only "as needed"—usually about once a week. Station agencies at Falls Church, Vienna, Sunset Hills, Leesburg, and Purcellville were closed at the same time, leaving only two active agents—one at the Arlington office and one at Herndon. Maintenance of both track and equipment dropped to virtually nothing. When the W&OD's last two operable diesels needed repairs in early 1968 they were simply sidetracked and a unit brought down from the Baltimore & Ohio (by then part of the C&O family) to fill in.

With service now at a bare minimum, Loudoun County decided to throw one more bat's wing into the roiling cauldron. In April 1968 it filed a complaint with



Lawyers were arguing the railroad's fate in March 1967 when a single C&O unit took a Saturday train east past the Falls Church station. The old Richmond & Danville station had become so shabby that the townspeople themselves repainted it. (H. H. Harwood, Jr.)

the ICC asking that either it force the railroad to provide adequate service or reopen the abandonment case. It went so far as to suggest that if the eastern part were allowed to go, the C&O should be forced to build a branch into Leesburg from the Baltimore & Ohio's main line at Point of Rocks, Maryland, 12 miles to the north.

Everything abruptly stopped in July. After considering the W&OD Users Association appeal the Federal court in Alexandria dismissed it on July 25th and allowed the railroad to abandon itself after July 28th. Having already spent \$75,000 in its futile fight, the Association gave up. On August 4th the W&OD embargoed all further shipments, although it continued running long enough to clear up traffic already en route.

The end came at last on August 27, 1968 when leased B&O switcher No. 9155 pulled two empty lumber boxcars from the Murphy & Ames siding in Falls Church and took them to Potomac Yard. On

August 30th the W&OD's three diesels, all of them inoperable, and the leased B&O unit were coupled together and shipped north to the B&O's Baltimore engine terminal. They were eventually sold to a locomotive salvage dealer.

The tracks remained in place for several months although rails were removed at many major street grade crossings. Dismantling began in January 1969—by truck—and was mostly completed by late summer. As planned, the Virginia Department of Highways took parts of the right-of-way through Falls Church for Interstate 66 as well as the property at the infamous Shirley Highway crossing and the balance was re-sold to VEPCO.

So after 121 years of almost constant struggle it was finally over for the Old Dominion. It was inevitable and hardly anyone was happy—but nobody could say that it had not lived a full life.


**EPILOGUE: THE AFTERLIFE**

1969 -



Snow has covered the abandoned track at the boarded and dishevelled Vienna station on this appropriately gloomy day in February 1969. The VEPCO power line, installed some years earlier, marks the right-of-way. (*H. H. Harwood, Jr.*)

The rails came up and most of the bridges came down, but otherwise most of the Washington & Old Dominion's right-of-way between Alexandria and Purcellville remained largely intact and untouched. Except for the portion of Interstate 66 through Falls Church and the Shirley Highway crossing, the line passed in one piece to Virginia Electric Power Company (then commonly called VEPCO and now known as Virginia Power). Thus, unlike many railroad abandonments, the entire right-of-way was preserved rather than being sold off piecemeal. Several of the old railroad stations also remained in place, some now privately owned and some inherited by VEPCO. (Sadly, the Falls Church station

was lost to a misfired preservation effort, but passenger stations at Vienna, Sunset Hills, Herndon, Hamilton, and Purcellville—plus the Leesburg freight house—survived. Beyond VEPCO's property the Round Hill passenger and freight stations also remained as residences.)

Preservation of the railroad's right-of-way for future use was one of the more contentious issues during the hard-fought abandonment case, so it was hardly surprising that it refused to disappear once VEPCO took over the property. If the W&OD had no future as a viable railroad, at least there was still a 45-mile-long open corridor leading through the northern Virginia suburbs to the Blue Ridge. Pressures began



The railroad's rebirth as a hiking trail began in Falls Church, shown here on opening day in September 1974. Its ghost showed clearly at the Little Falls Road crossing. (*H. H. Harwood, Jr.*)

building for a hiking-biking trail—a “linear park” somewhat like the nearby (and very successful) Chesapeake & Ohio Canal.

The line went through five different political jurisdictions, which normally would have caused major problems in creating a single unified “park.” But happily there was a vehicle to accomplish it. Nine years before the W&OD’s demise a new entity had appeared, created in response to some of the same forces which killed the railroad. Concerned by the explosive sprawl rapidly obliterating open land in Washington’s southern suburbs, three local governments joined forces to organize the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority (NVRPA). Their aim was to preserve enough of this land to create a balanced system of parks through the entire area. Three other government entities eventually joined the agency, so that it represented Arlington, Fairfax, and Loudoun counties plus the cities of Alexandria, Falls Church, and Fairfax—in effect, the Washington & Old Dominion’s entire territory.

But the process of doing so turned out to be long and difficult, with strong echoes of the Alexandria, Loudoun & Hampshire’s early struggles with financing

and construction. VEPCO’s primary concern, of course, was simply to maintain a right-of-way for its high-voltage electric transmission lines, which had been built back when the W&OD was still an operating railroad; actually it had little use for the land below the transmission towers and wires except for maintenance and repair access. Nonetheless, finding a meeting of minds between the utility and the park authority was not easy.

With limited funds and many demands, the authority initially tried to persuade VEPCO simply to donate an easement over its property; perhaps properly, the power company saw nothing in it for itself and refused. Undeterred, NVRPA commissioned studies in 1973 and began to put together a comprehensive plan for the trail. And as an interim step, VEPCO, the park agency, and the City of Falls Church signed a lease agreement to permit paving of part of the railroad right-of-way within Falls Church. On September 7, 1974, Falls Church Mayor Harold Miller and Vice Mayor Lee Rhoads cut the ribbon for the first section of the Washington & Old Dominion Railroad Regional Park. With about 43 miles to go, it would be the first of many such events. Hikers and bicyclists immediately took to it, encouraging more action.



Electric trains return to the W&OD—sort of. Interstate 66 and the Washington Metro's Vienna line occupy part of the old railroad's right-of-way through East Falls Church. The view looks west; the rail route is marked by the power line running from left to distant center. (H. H. Harwood, Jr.)

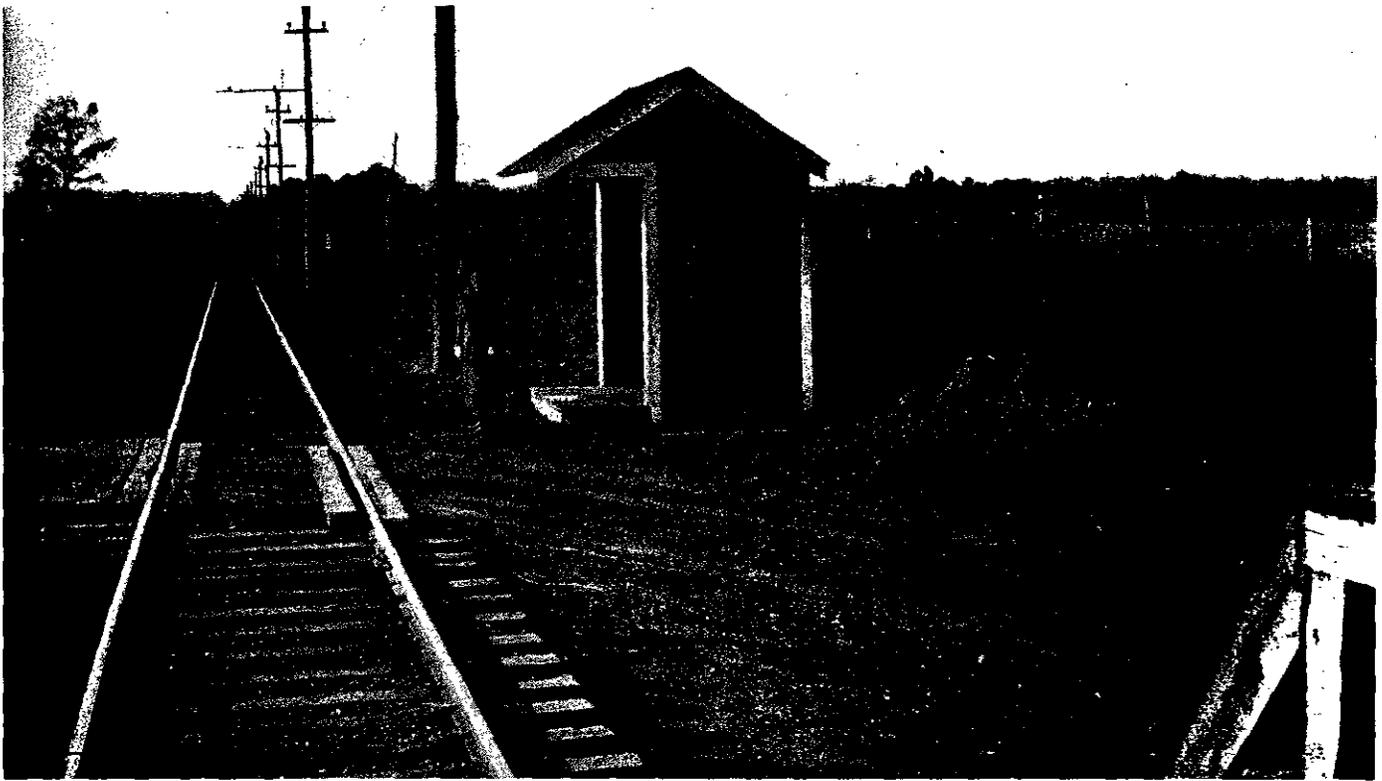
The property problem was finally resolved in 1977 when NVRPA Capital Programs Director David Hobson negotiated an outright purchase agreement with VEPCO. The total price was \$3.6 million—slightly more than the railroad had sold for in 1968—which was to be paid in installments as the park authority could generate the funds.

While the original railroad builders were also chronically short of money, they at least could lay their track through relatively unchallenging open farmland. The park planners now had to contend with an environment which was becoming more urbanized by the day. New expressways and limited-access bypass highways sliced across the old line, and what had once been two-lane country roads were rapidly metamorphosing into four- and six-lane thoroughfares. Thus they not only needed to rebuild most of the original railroad bridges but also had to build new overpasses or underpasses at the expressways and busier highways.

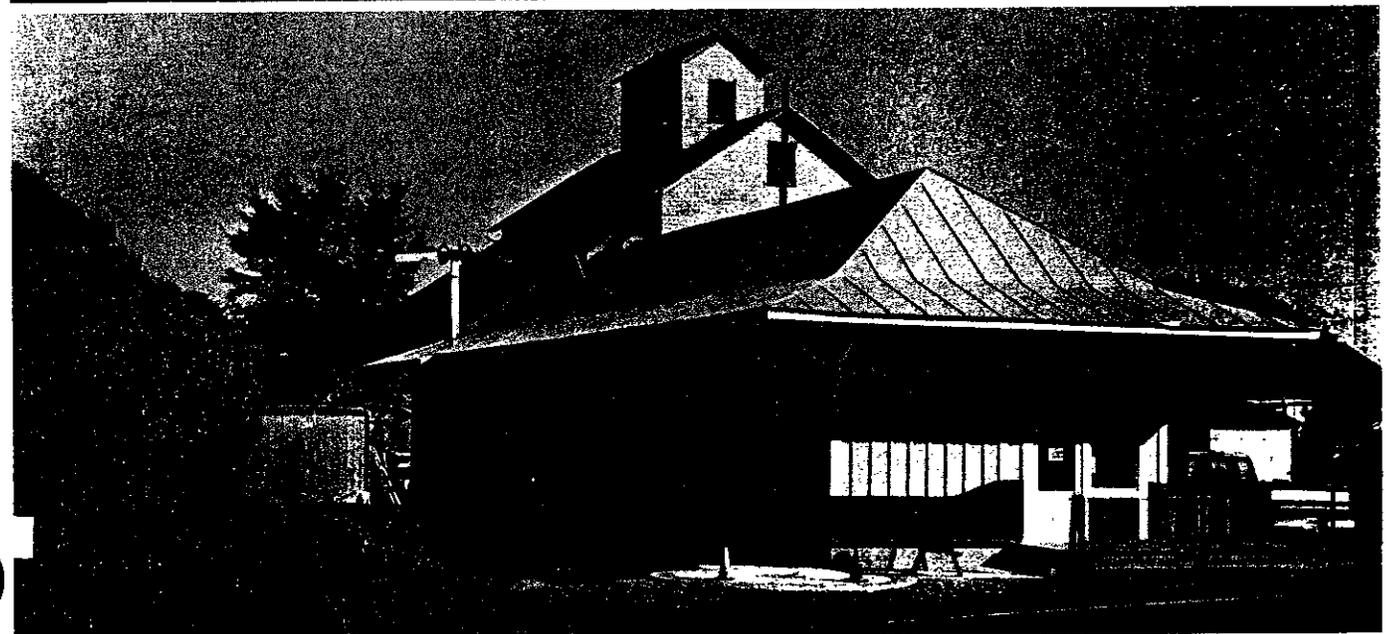
Helped in part by grants from both the state and the federal governments, the first major trail section—from Falls Church to Vienna—opened in 1979. By May 1981, the old right-of-way was paved from Lee Highway in Arlington to Herndon, 16 miles; various other portions of the trail were made as passable as possible with gravel. A paralleling bridle path was built between Vienna and Leesburg.

Afterward, the trail pavement was extended incrementally both west and east as funds came available. By September 1984, the paved portion of the trail extended from Interstate 395 at Shirlington through Herndon to Sterling. A year later it reached Leesburg.

Finally, on November 5, 1988 the park authority celebrated the opening of the trail's last nine miles into Purcellville. In all, the full cycle of death and rebirth had taken almost precisely 20 years. But this time the rebirth was strong and looked permanent; for the year 2000 park officials estimated that three million hikers,



About 80 years separate these two views at the same location at present-day Smiths Switch Road looking west toward Ashburn. Called Norman's station by the railroad, it is now the headquarters of the W&OD Railroad Regional Park. (1920s view: W&OD; 1999 view: H. H. Harwood, Jr.)



Purcellville station in, successively, 1951, 1958, and 1999. The railroad is gone, but much else remains the same.  
(All, H. H. Harwood, Jr.)



The Southern Ry.'s turn-of-the-century station at Round Hill also remains in pristine condition, over 60 years after the rails were taken up. (H. H. Harwood, Jr.)

bicyclists, joggers, and horseback riders would be using the trail. Some, in fact, were even commuters—not riding to Washington, as they once did on the trains, but healthily cycling to work at the numerous satellite office parks which have sprung up along the line. In all, it was (and is) surely one of the most popular projects of the growing “rails to trails” movement.

The Washington & Old Dominion's ghost also lingers elsewhere. As noted in Chapter 7, the onetime GF&OD-W&OD Great Falls Division now carries motor vehicles as Old Dominion Drive. Although parts of the road have since been widened, much of it looks as it did when the trolleys ran. The original 1906 steel railway trestle over Difficult Run near Great Falls was recycled for the road and survived into the 1970s before it was finally replaced.

Additionally, two sections of the Washington & Old Dominion still carried trains at the turn of the 21st century—each section fulfilling very different parts of the railroad's onetime goals. In Falls Church, Washington Metro's Vienna Orange Line occupies the median strip of Interstate 66, which in turn uses the old right-of-way through the city. Thus the vision of

a thriving electric railway through the northern Virginia suburbs came true with a vengeance, albeit far too late for McLean, Elkins, or the promoters of the old Washington, Arlington & Falls Church trolley line.

And finally, one bit of the original Alexandria, Loudoun & Hampshire still existed as an operating railroad in 1999. Norfolk Southern—the Southern Railway's successor—still owned a short section of track connecting CSX Transportation's mainline at the former Potomac Yard (itself now abandoned and redeveloped) with a Potomac Electric Power Company electric generating plant on Alexandria's north side, which it used to deliver coal to the plant. Much of this spur, including its grade crossing of the George Washington Memorial Parkway, follows the AL&H's right-of-way through northern Alexandria. (Although this particular section carried Washington & Old Dominion cars, it was historically owned and operated by the Southern Railway and never part of W&OD property.) And so, in a way, the story ends where it began, with this last tiny operating vestige fulfilling the dreams of Lewis McKenzie and his 19th century cohorts as it rolls West Virginia coal into Alexandria.



# PHOTO GALLERY

## A W&OD TRAVELOGUE THROUGH TIME

### ROSSLYN

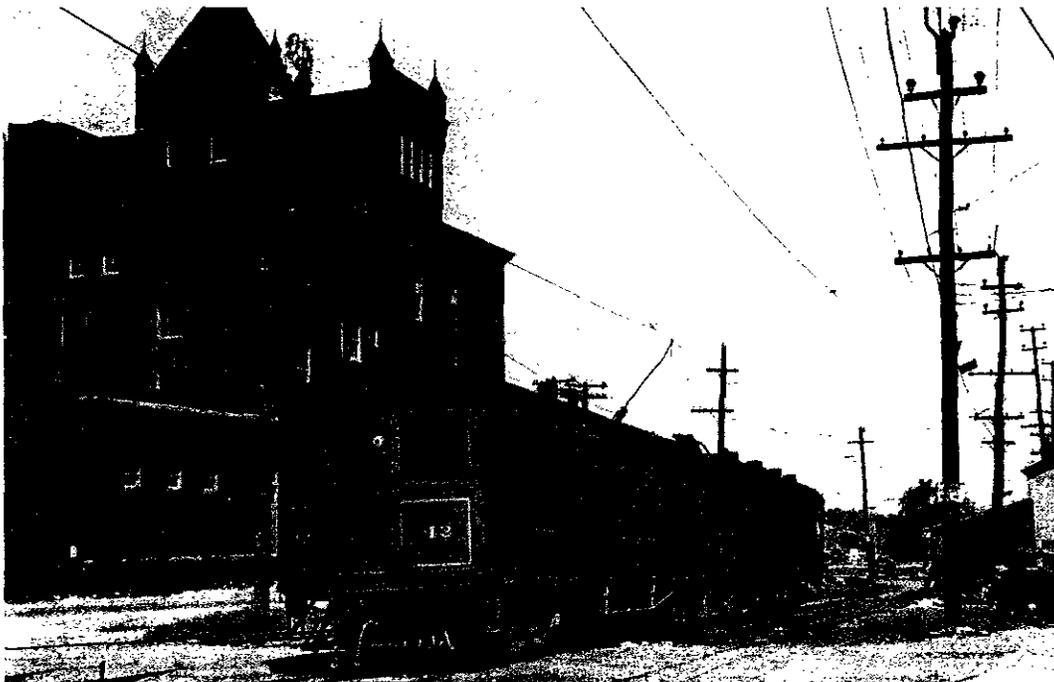


Rosslyn was the W&OD's nerve center, such as it was. This 1946 view looks east toward the W&OD shop and downtown Rosslyn. The Lee Highway is at the left; the two tracks in the center once led to the Rosslyn terminal station and, before 1923, to the Aqueduct Bridge and Georgetown. The diesel at the right is on an industrial spur which extended south along Nash St. (H. H. Harwood, Jr.)

Looking west from roughly the same location about 1939. In the center is the Rosslyn freight house; the steam crane in front was used for loading and unloading flatcars and gondolas. The Lee Highway is at the far right below the railroad grade.

This area is now smothered by I-66. (W&OD)





The regular early afternoon mail run for Purcellville crosses Nash St. leaving Rosslyn in August 1940. Behind is the hulking onetime brewery, Rosslyn's principal landmark since 1896. Originally built by the Consumers Brewing Co., it became the Arlington Brewing Co., and, after Prohibition, a Cherry Smash soft drink plant. It came down in 1958, to be succeeded by a Marriott hotel. (L. W. Rice)

In the later electric years, home-built freight motor 26 was a regular fixture as the Rosslyn yard switcher. Here it jockeys a pair of single-sheath boxcars in early 1940. (J. P. Shuman)



The morning passenger run from Purcellville, consisting of diesel 48 and the permanently disabled motor car 46, pulls into Rosslyn in 1946. The view looks west toward the overpass over Lee Highway. (H. H. Harwood, Jr.)

The layout at Bluemont Junction as it looked in 1946. The camera looks west from the Rosslyn branch; on the left is the former steam road from Alexandria. The modest building complex consisted of (right to left) the passenger station (later dispatcher's office), former substation, and freight shed. A wye track was located behind the buildings. (H. H. Harwood, Jr.)



Looking east in August 1946, the early afternoon Purcellville passenger run is arriving from Rosslyn. The branch to Potomac Yard and Alexandria is at the right. (H. H. Harwood, Jr.)



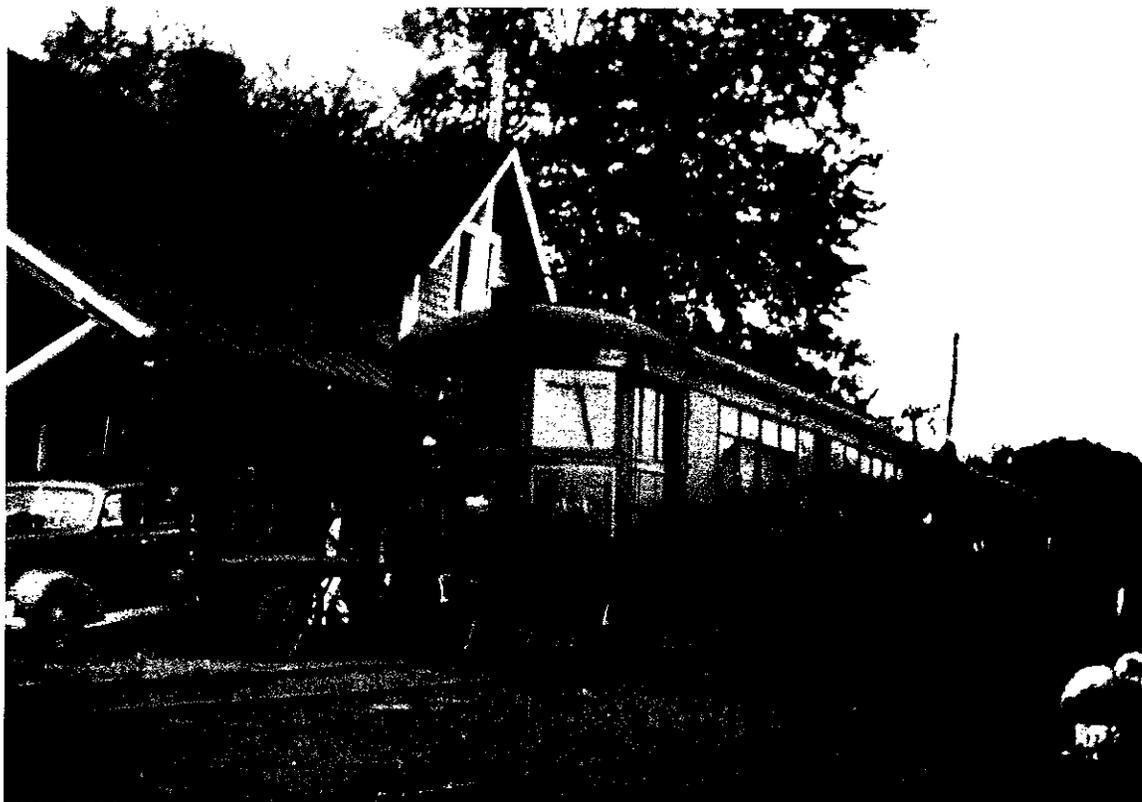
On a winter morning in 1948 passenger motor car 52 from Purcellville has moved onto the Rosslyn branch while westbound diesel 49 from Potomac Yard waits to clear. (H. H. Harwood, Jr.)

# FALLS CHURCH



Falls Church (or East Falls Church) station, looking east in 1946. The design, with its distinctive diamond-shaped ventilator window, was a standardized Richmond & Danville plan similar to Leesburg. (H. H. Harwood, Jr.)

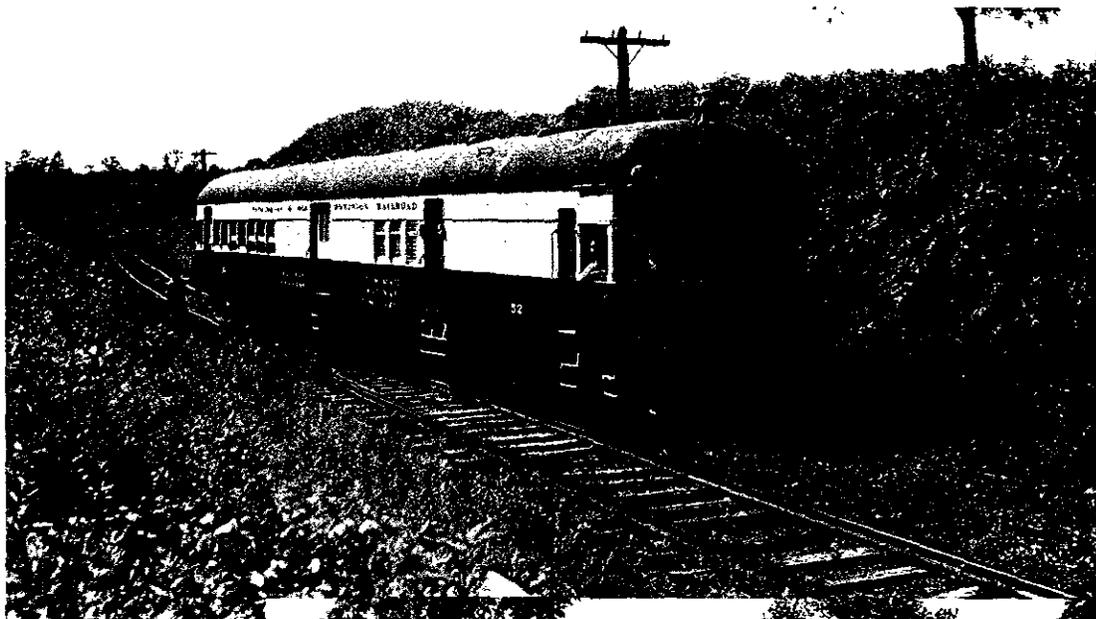
A westbound electric train with mail-express motor car 44 trailing, pauses at Falls Church in August 1940. (G. F. Cunningham)



On May 31, 1951, the last day of W&OD passenger service, a cluster of mourners get out to stretch while No. 45 does its mail and express chores. The view looks west from Washington St. crossing. (E. S. Miller)



## DUNN LORING



Testing its newly installed diesel engine, car 52 enters the siding at the Dunn Loring cut on July 2, 1947 (L. W. Rice)

The tiny but elegant 1887 Dunn Loring station still housed the local post office in 1958. Mrs. John Lewwlyn, the postmistress, paused in her duties to watch a westbound freight pass her door. (H. H. Harwood, Jr.)



# VIENNA



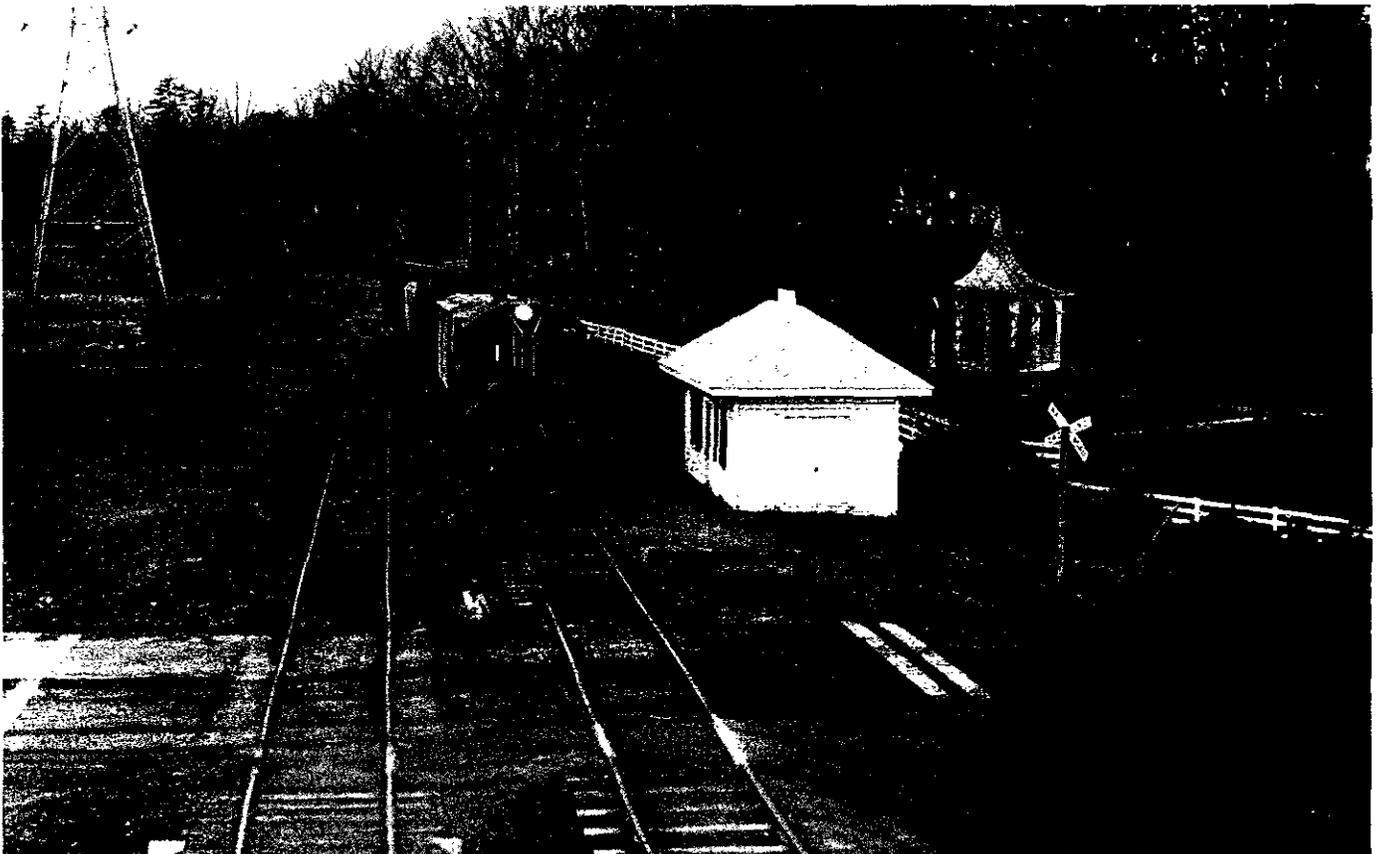
Vienna station in 1909, during the Southern Railway era. Note the traditional train order boards above the station—which also were used by the W&OD—and the water tank in the rear. (*Library of Congress*)



Forty-two years later the station is virtually unchanged as westbound W&OD train 5 unloads mail while conductor John Kelly passes the time with an employee riding in the rear cab. (*H. H. Harwood, Jr.*)



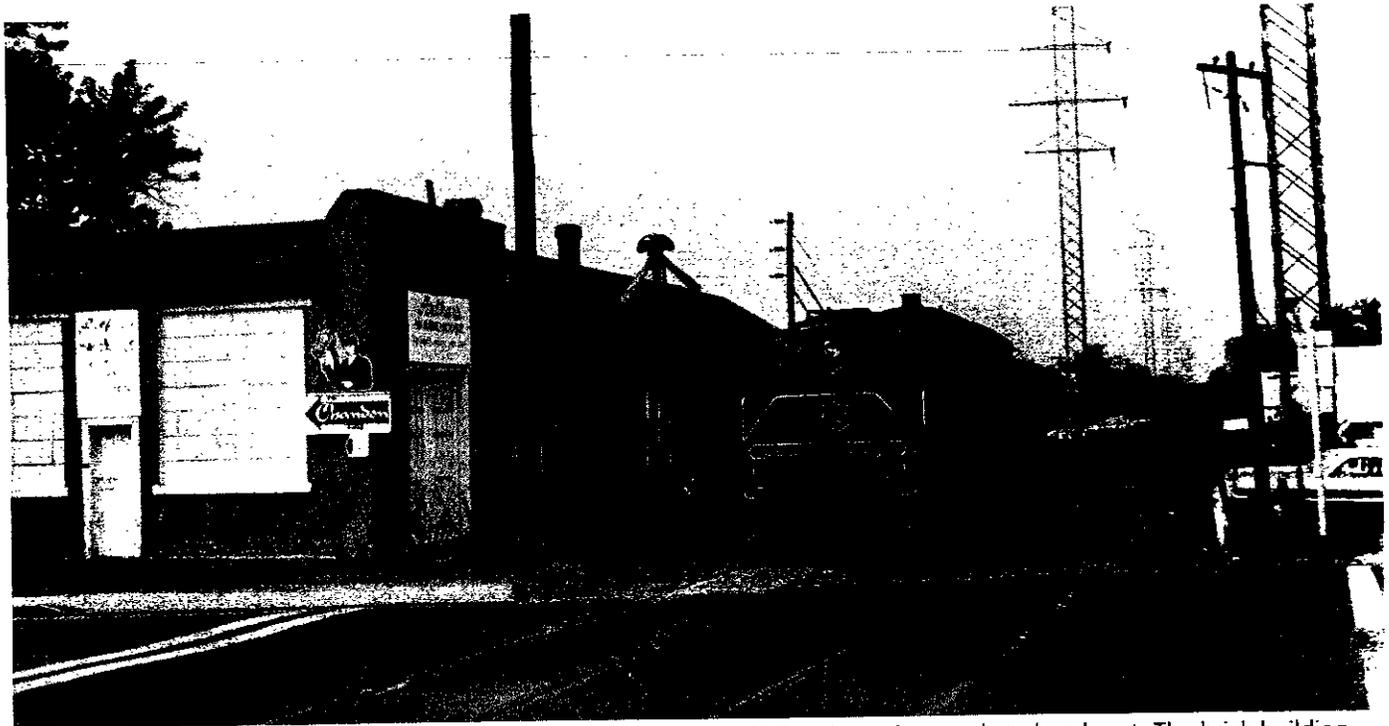
One of the most charming spots along the Old Dominion was Sunset Hills, site of the stillborn late 19th century "new town" of Wiehle. In 1958 the W&OD's two GE 70-tonners, 56 and 57, pass the pond and Bowman distillery. (H. H. Harwood, Jr.)



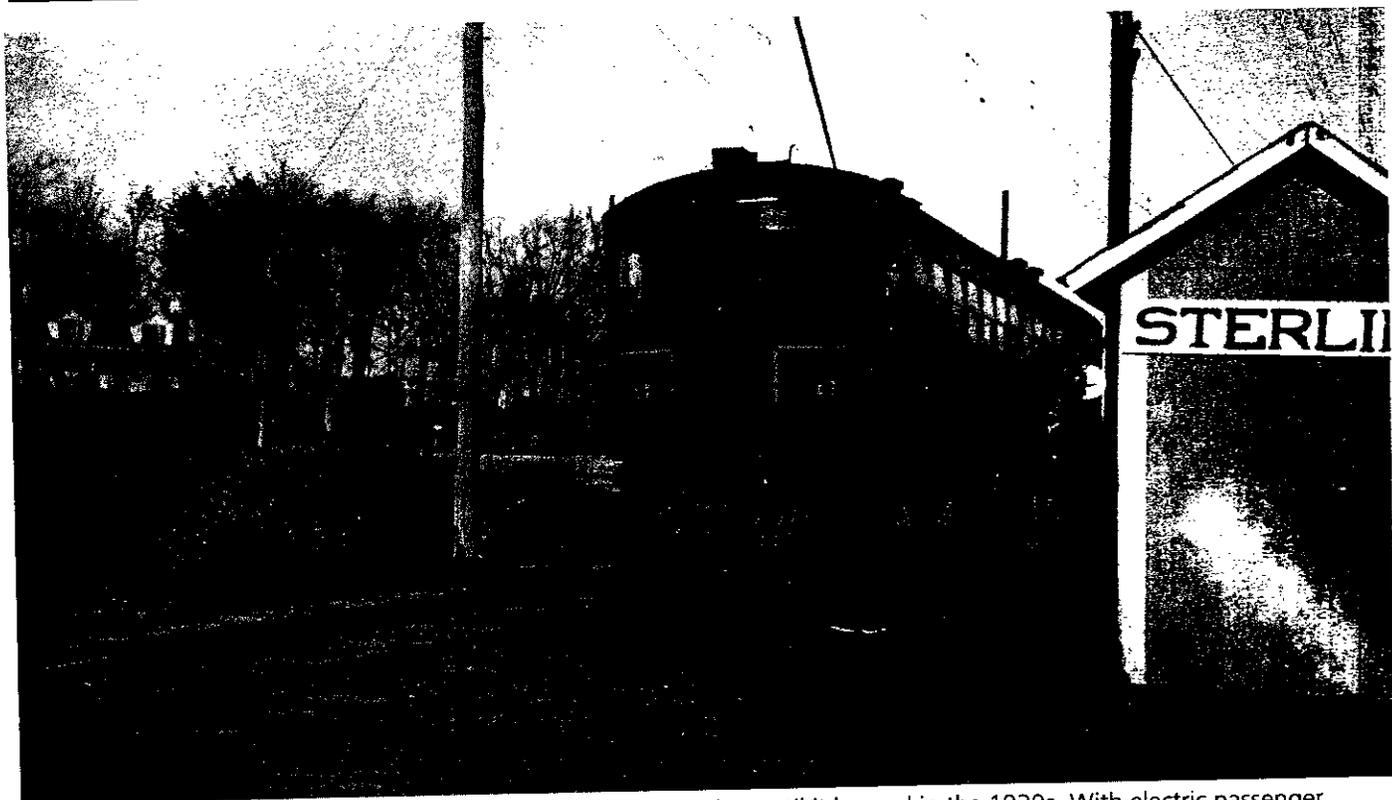
During the railroad's last year, a C&O Alco switcher heads east with a short Saturday consist. The elaborate gazebo behind the austere Sunset Hills station is a relic of Dr. Wiehle's dream. (H. H. Harwood, Jr.)



Herndon station, looking west in the 1890s. Even at this date, the trains were carrying commuters into Washington. The station's train order board is set to stop a westbound train. (*W&OD Railroad Regional Park collection*)



The old steam era station was much the same in 1967 as a pair of C&O units makes ready to head east. The brick building next to the station was added in 1912 to house an electric substation. The station itself was subsequently restored but the old substation was removed. (*H. H. Harwood, Jr.*)



Sterling boasted a typical full passenger and freight agency station until it burned in the 1930s. With electric passenger service in its last days, this frugal shelter took its place.



Diesel units 58 and 57 grind east through Sterling in March 1967. (H. H. Harwood, Jr.)

# ASHBURN



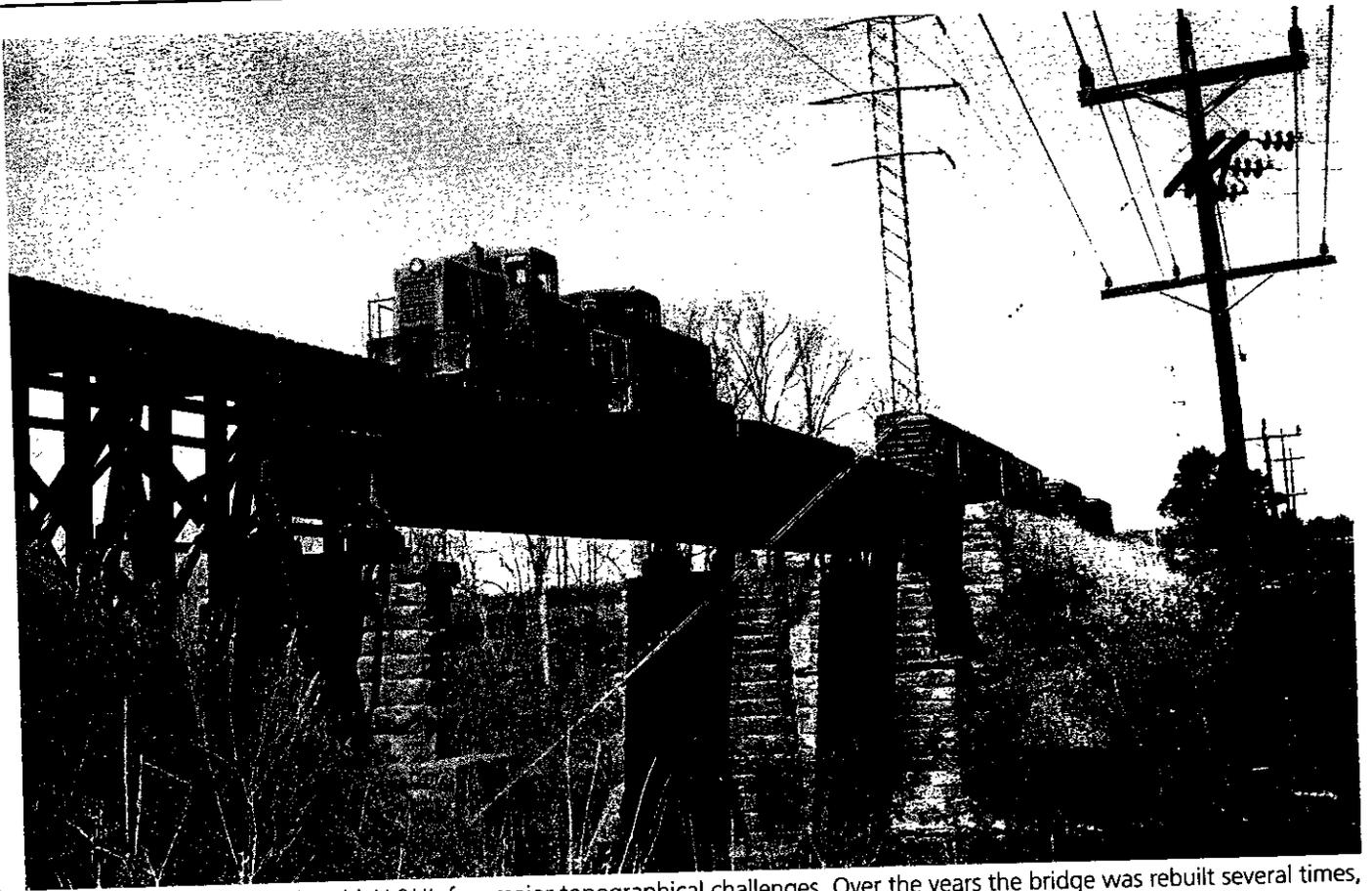
Motor car 45 loads at Ashburn on its westbound trip in March 1951. (H. H. Harwood, Jr.)

The scene was considerably bleaker in early 1967 when diesels 57 and 58 rumbled west with a short train of empty hoppers for the Trap Rock quarry. (H. H. Harwood, Jr.)



On the same date in 1967, eastbound units 58 and 57 rumble past the boarded station. The building at the rear reputedly dates to the time when the railroad first arrived at what was then called Farmwell. (H. H. Harwood, Jr.)

## TRAP ROCK-GOOSE CREEK



Goose Creek was one of the old AL&H's few major topographical challenges. Over the years the bridge was rebuilt several times, ending its life as this girder-trestle combination built by the Southern Ry. in 1909. Nos. 58-57 are eastbound in March 1967. (H. H. Harwood, Jr.)



The Trap Rock stone quarry, west of Belmont Park station, was the W&OD's largest single freight shipper and a major supplier of roadbuilding material for the northern Virginia area. In this 1958 scene, loaded gondolas and hoppers fill every available track while units 56 and 57 switch the crusher. Switching heavily loaded cars on this grade tested a crew's skills, and Trap Rock had more than its share of mishaps. (H. H. Harwood, Jr.)

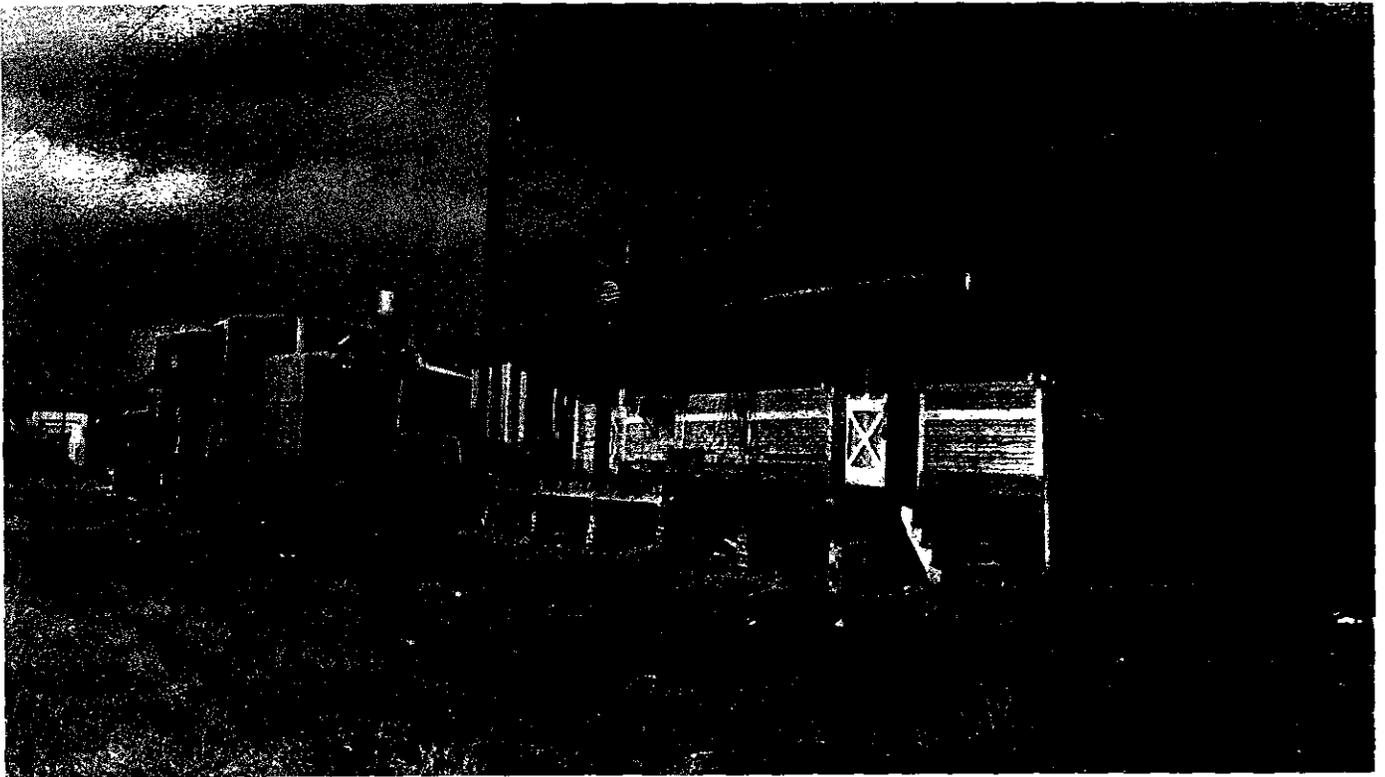
# LEESBURG



A typical two-car train of the late electric era stops at Leesburg passenger station in August 1940. Note that the train order board is up, indicating that the agent has orders or a message for the train crew. (G. F. Cunningham)



The order board has since disappeared and the west end of the station has been altered to house maintenance equipment, but the building was still well-kept in March 1951 when westbound No. 45 made its regular call. (H. H. Harwood, Jr.)



Leesburg's freight house, several blocks east of the passenger station, was built by the Southern Ry. in 1898. During the 1960s diesels were based here to operate the railroad west of Herndon, where lighter power was required. (H. H. Harwood, Jr.)



Looking east at the Leesburg freight station in March 1967. The loaded hopper in the left foreground is on the wye track originally used to turn steam locomotives. (H. H. Harwood, Jr.)

## CLARKE'S GAP



Although not much more than a large hill in this area, the Catoclin ridge at Clarke's (or Clark's) Gap was the only mountain the railroad ever crossed. A westbound freight passes through the summit cut and under the old stone bridge carrying Virginia Route 7, since bypassed. (H. H. Harwood, Jr.)



In a view west from the stone highway bridge, an eastbound freight from Purcellville enters the cut in April 1967. (H. H. Harwood, Jr.)

## HAMILTON

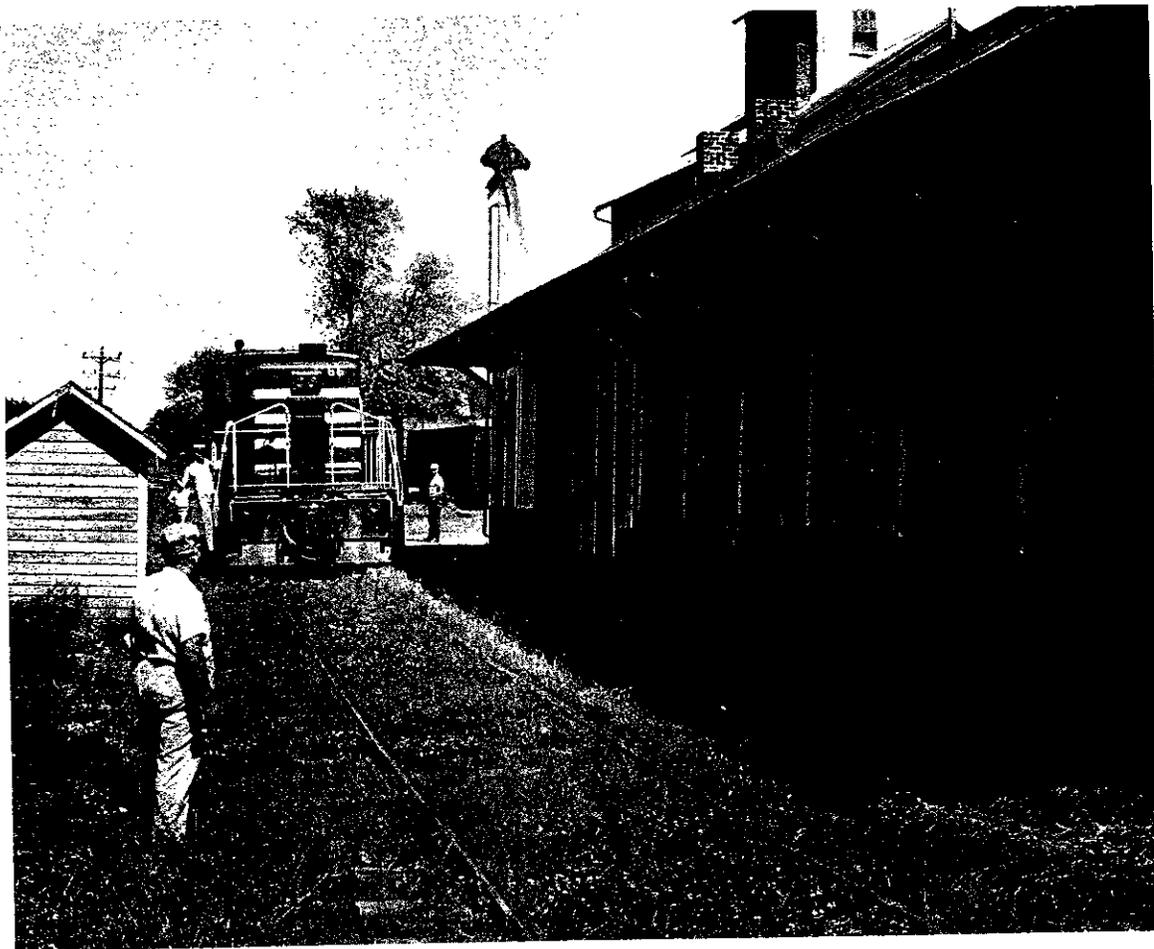


Hamilton station, as seen looking east from the rear of a westbound passenger car in March 1951. By then the station was unused by the railroad, but it still survived in 1999. (H. H. Harwood, Jr.)

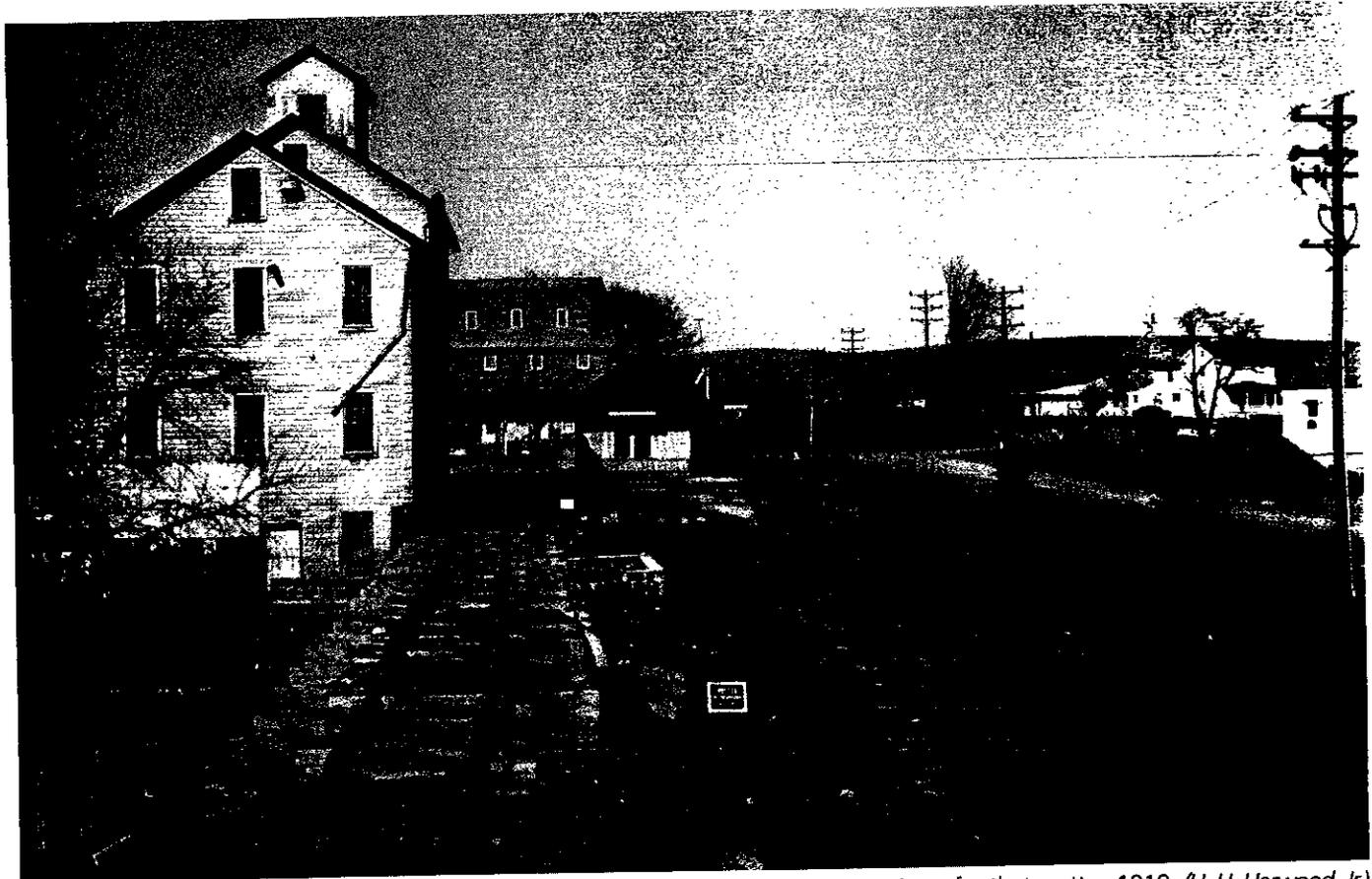
## PURCELLVILLE



It is about 4:30 in Purcellville on a midsummer afternoon in 1940. Interurban cars 76 and 44 have just completed their run from Rosslyn and will return in about an hour. (G. F. Cunningham)



It is now June 1958. Passenger service has been gone for seven years, but there is still a healthy amount of freight work for this crew to handle.  
*(H. H. Harwood, Jr.)*



The April 1967 scene, here looking west, was essentially the same as in 1958, or 1940, or, for that matter, 1910. *(H. H. Harwood, Jr.)*

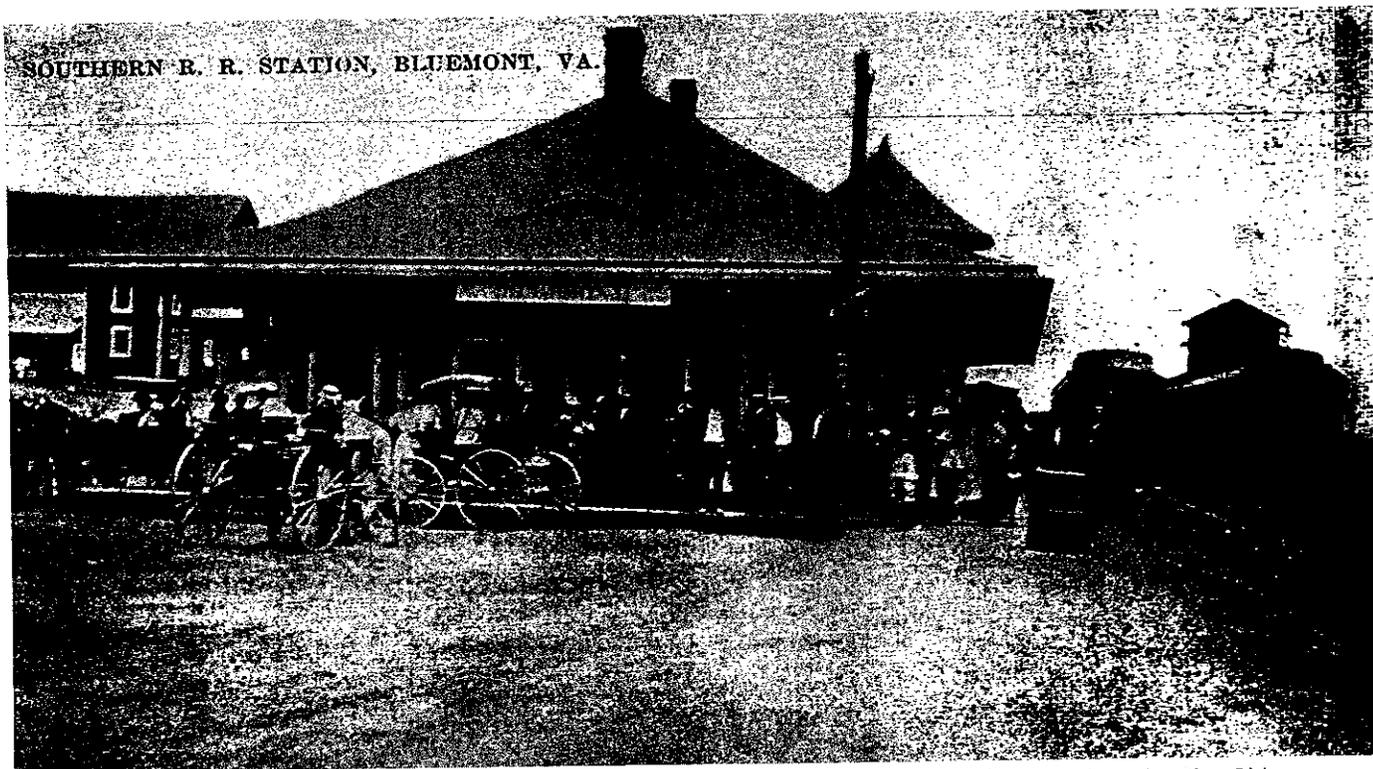
R. R. Station, Bluemont, Va

1908



What appears to be an elderly Southern Ry. 3700-series 4-4-0 has brought its three-car train into the railroad's new western terminal in 1908. The elaborate wood frame station, built for the Bluemont extension's opening in 1900, burned in 1920. (LeRoy O. King collection)

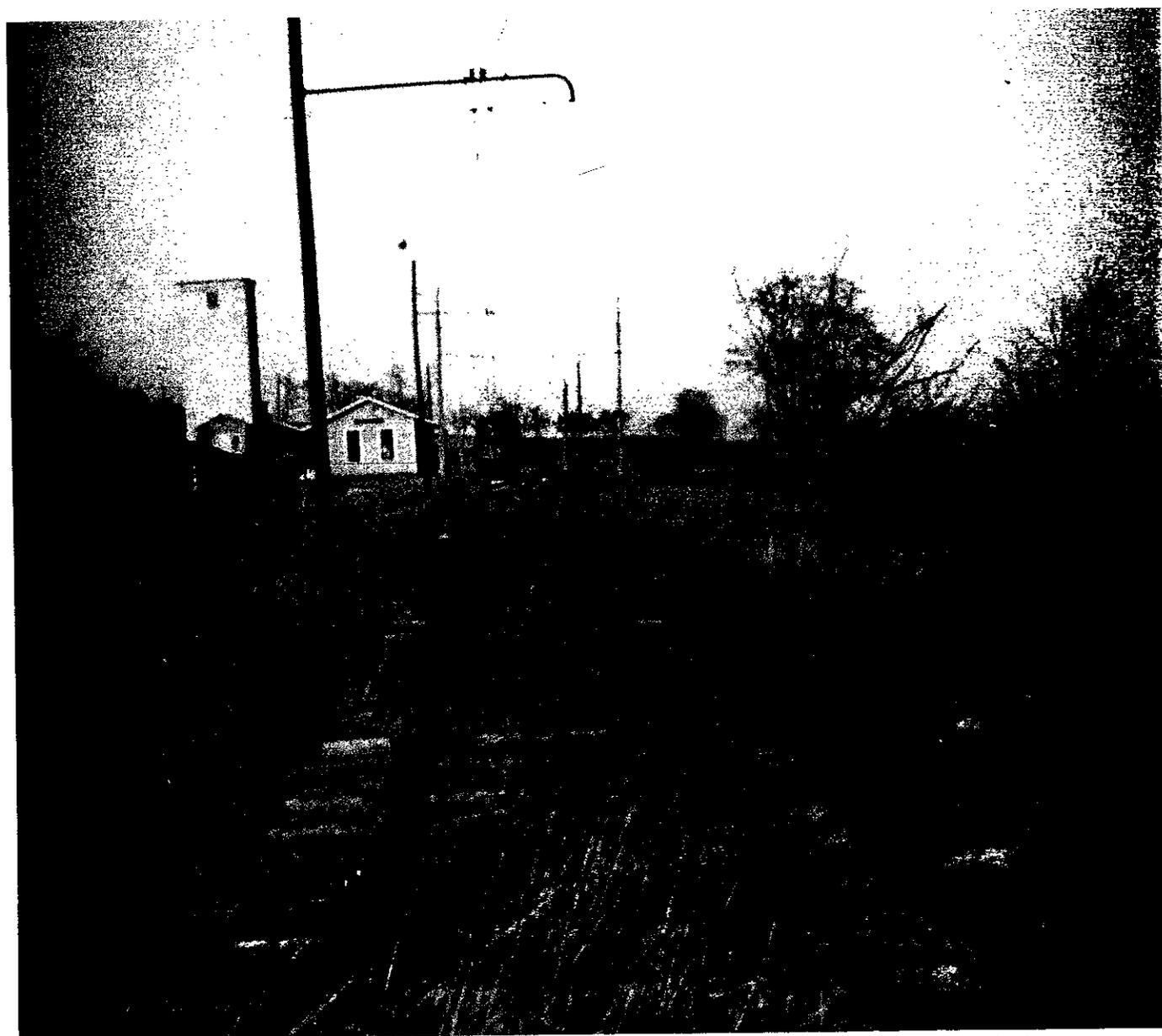
SOUTHERN R. R. STATION, BLUEMONT, VA.



Bluemont in its heyday: A crowd of summer excursionists head for waiting carriages for their tour into the Blue Ridge. The locomotive has already uncoupled to be turned on the wye track, out of the picture at the right. (Thomas Underwood collection)



Shadows are falling on Bluemont, figuratively and literally. The usual two-car interurban train awaits its 5:10 p.m. departure time at the austere replacement station in February 1939, the line's last year. (R. K. Henry)



The end of the line and the end of Alexandria's mid-19th century hopes. The barren early 1939 scene clearly shows why the W&OD's western extremity had only a few months to live. (R. K. Henry)

# APPENDICES

## CHRONOLOGY

ALEXANDRIA & HARPER'S FERRY RAILROAD chartered .....	March 20, 1847
ALEXANDRIA, LOUDOUN & HAMPSHIRE RAILROAD chartered .....	March 15, 1853
Construction begins at Alexandria .....	Feb. 16, 1855
Opened to Vienna .....	August, 1859
Opened to Leesburg .....	May 17, 1860
WASHINGTON & OHIO RAILROAD formed .....	July 26, 1870
Opened to Hamilton .....	1870
Opened to Round Hill .....	1874
Placed in receivership .....	Feb. 9, 1878
WASHINGTON & WESTERN RAILROAD takes over property .....	May 25, 1882
WASHINGTON, OHIO & WESTERN RAILROAD takes over property .....	May 23, 1883
Leased to Richmond & Danville Railroad .....	Oct. 30, 1886
SOUTHERN RAILWAY absorbs WO&W .....	June 28, 1894
Round Hill-Bluemont extension opened .....	Summer 1900
GREAT FALLS & OLD DOMINION RAILROAD organized .....	January 1900
Opened to Difficult Run .....	March 7, 1906
Opened to Great Falls .....	July 3, 1906
WASHINGTON & OLD DOMINION RAILWAY incorporated .....	May 2, 1911
Thrifton-Bluemont Junction line opened .....	June 30, 1912
Assumed operation of Southern Ry. Bluemont Branch .....	July 1, 1912
Electrified, Bluemont Junction-Leesburg .....	Oct. 6, 1912
Electrified, Leesburg-Bluemont. ....	December 1912
Electrified, Bluemont Junction-Alexandria (Potomac Yard) .....	1916
Rosslyn terminal opened .....	Dec. 9, 1923
W&OD Ry. placed in receivership .....	Jan. 29, 1932
Great Falls Division operation ceased .....	June 8, 1934
Great Falls Division formally abandoned .....	Nov. 9, 1934
WASHINGTON & OLD DOMINION RAILROAD organized .....	1935
Assumes operation of former W&OD Ry .....	April 16, 1936
Purcellville-Bluemont segment abandoned .....	March, 1939
Rosslyn terminal demolished .....	1939
Passenger service abandoned .....	April 23, 1941
First diesel (No. 47) delivered .....	December, 1941
Passenger service resumed .....	March 22, 1943
Potomac Yard-Purcellville line purchased from Southern Ry .....	Dec. 15, 1943
Last electric operation (Rosslyn Yard) .....	April, 1944
Passenger service abandoned .....	May 31, 1951
W&OD acquired by Chesapeake & Ohio Ry .....	Nov. 2, 1956
Rosslyn-Washington Blvd. (Arlington) segment abandoned .....	Sept. 30, 1963
Bluemont Jct.-Washington Blvd. segment abandoned .....	1964
Last revenue train operation .....	August 27, 1968

# EQUIPMENT ROSTERS

## THE STEAM ERA—1859 – 1911

ALEXANDRIA, LOUDOUN & HAMPSHIRE RAILROAD  
WASHINGTON & OHIO RAILROAD  
WASHINGTON & WESTERN RAILROAD  
WASHINGTON, OHIO & WESTERN RAILROAD

Data on the line's steam locomotives during its independent years is fragmentary and incomplete. It would appear that a total of eight locomotives operated on this line at one time or another during the period before the Richmond & Danville lease in 1886. Only six of these are documented to any degree; data on the others are based on undetailed reports from various sources.

- AL&H "Lewis McKenzie"      4-4-0; Mason Machine Works, 10/1858; c.n. 80. Drivers 60"; cyls. 15"x22"; weight 27 tons.
- AL&H "Charles P. Manning"    4-4-0; Mason Machine Works 7/1859; c.n. 85; dimensions same
- AL&H "Clarke"                4-4-0; Mason Machine Works 10/1859; c.n. 90 dimensions same

The first two locomotives were taken by the Confederates in 1861 for service elsewhere in Virginia and were renamed "General Johnston" and "General Beauregard". The "Clarke" became U.S. Military Railroad 94, retaining its name. Presumably, all three were returned in 1865 and later given numbers 1-3. They were apparently retired in the 1883-84 period.

- AL&H    4      4-4-0; details unknown. Probably U.S. Military Railroad surplus; acquired 1868; apparently retired c.1885-86.
- W&O    5(?)    2-6-0; details unknown. Acquired by W&O c.1880, probably secondhand. Weight 45 tons; apparently retired or sold c.1885-86.
- WO&W   6      4-4-0; New York Loco. Works (Rome), 1/1883; c.n. 5. Drivers 62"; cyls. 17"x24" To Richmond & Danville 790 c.1887; to Southern 978-1768-3768; retired 1914
- WO&W   7      4-4-0; N. Y. Loco. Works 8/1885; c.n. 117; same dimensions as No. 6. To R&D 791 c. 1887; to Southern 979-1769-3769; retired 8/11.
- WO&W   8      4-4-0; N. Y. Loco. Works 8/1885; c.n. 118; dimensions same as No. 6. To R&D 792 c.1887; to Southern 980-1770-3770; retired 9/09 but intact 1912.

Eight locomotives were reported as on hand in 1884, presumably all those shown above. (They may have been anticipating delivery of Nos. 7-8.) At the time of the WO&W's lease to the Richmond & Danville in 1886, only the three WO&W 4-4-0s remained. Afterward R&D and (after 1894) Southern Railway power was assigned from the divisional terminal at Alexandria. Various 4-4-0s, 4-6-0s, and 2-8-0s were used, mostly lighter power from Southern predecessors such as the R&D and ETV&G. At least two former WO&W 4-4-0s (ex-WO&W 7-8) were based at Alexandria until retirement and probably continued to work the line at various times.

In 1911 the Southern assigned General Electric gas-electric coach No. 1 to a Washington-Leesburg round trip schedule. This car was built by GE 2/1911; length 55', with 52 seats and a small baggage compartment. Wason body; GE Model GM16A engine (175 hp).

## GREAT FALLS & OLD DOMINION RAILROAD 1906 – 1912

- 1-5 Wood electric coach; Cincinnati Car Co., 1905-06; see W&OD roster for details
- 6 Wood electric combine; Southern Car Co., 1906; see W&OD roster for details
- 7-8 Wood electric coach; Jackson & Sharpe, 1906; see W&OD roster for details
- 1st 9 City streetcar; Southern Car Co., 1907. Renumbered 10 in 1909; see W&OD 10 for details.
- 2nd 9 Single-truck city streetcar; American Car Co. 1896; see W&OD roster for details.
- 10 City streetcar; ex-GF&OD 1st #9 above; see W&OD roster for details
- 11 Wood electric coach, GF&OD shop, 1911; rebuilt from 1878 Manhattan Ry. elevated coach. See W&OD roster for details.
- 12-15 Wood electric coach; Jewett Car Co., 1911. No. 13 wrecked first day of operation and scrapped; others to W&OD. See W&OD roster for details.
- 100 Wood express-work motor; Cincinnati Car Co., 1906. Originally delivered with what appear to be Wason 21 trucks and two motors (both housed in one truck), similar to streetcar #9 (1st). Rebuilt by W&OD about 1913; see W&OD roster for further details.
- 169 0-4-4 Forney-type steam locomotive; New York Loco. Works (Rome) 1887, c.n. 225. Ex-Manhattan Ry. 169; acquired by GF&OD 3/06; retired c.1910; sold 1913 to Birmingham Rail & Loco.; resold 3/13 to Morgan & Shore, Mabel, Fla.
- 324 0-4-4 Forney steam locomotive; Baldwin 1891, c.n. 11616. Ex-Manhattan Ry. 324; acquired by GF&OD 11/06; retired c.1910; sold 1913 to BR&L; resold 6/13 to Williams & McKeithan Lbr. Co. for J. R. Pait, Mars Bluff, S. C.
- 325 0-4-4 Forney steam locomotive; Baldwin 1891, c.n. 11617. Ex-Manhattan Ry. 325; acquired by GF&OD 11/06; retired c.1910; sold 1913 to BR&L; resold 5/13 to McLaurin Lbr. Co., Dixie, S. C.; to H. H. Johnson Lbr. Co. #1, Haughton, La. 11/19; to Atlantic Marl & Fertilizer Co. New Bern, N. C. 6/20.
- 101-106 Wood open-platform steam trailer coaches. Length 42'. Ex-Manhattan Ry. 46, 82, 152-154, and 212. Former No. 46 built by Gilbert & Bush 1878, all others by Wason in 1878. Acquired by GF&OD 5/06 (#46, 152) and 11/06 (all others). Three cars retired c.1910. One car rebuilt as electric passenger motor car 11 (see W&OD roster); 104 and 106 became maintenance of way camp cars and remained on W&OD roster.

Washington Ry. & Electric Co. No. 501 was leased in 1906 for use as Aqueduct Bridge shuttle car pending the arrival of the GF&OD's own streetcar, first No. 9.

The GF&OD also had several small single-truck trailer cars used for freight and work duties which apparently were originally unnumbered. By 1911 these had been given 100-series numbers as follows: one 17'3"-long boxcar-caboose (#102), three 18'3" flatcars (#101, 103, 105), one 22' flatcar (#109), and one double-truck 44' flatcar (#107).

WASHINGTON & OLD DOMINION RAILWAY  
WASHINGTON & OLD DOMINION RAILROAD  
1912 - 1944

ELECTRIC PASSENGER CARS

- 1-5 Wood coach; Cincinnati Car Co, 1906. Length 42'3"; 44 seats. Wason 25 trucks; 4 WH 93-A motors (75 hp); K-14B control. Ex-GF&OD 1-5. Cars 1-2 renumbered 16-17 in 1917. All scrapped 1933 except #4 wrecked c.1919. Primarily assigned to Great Falls Division.
- 6 Wood combine; Southern Car Co., 1906. Length 42'3"; 28 seats. Wason 25 trucks; 4 WH 93-A motors (75 hp); K-14B control. Ex-GF&OD 6. Primarily assigned to Great Falls Div.; occasionally pulled trailers. Scrapped 1935.
- 7-8 Wood coach; Jackson & Sharpe, 1906. Length 42'; 44 seats. Wason 25 trucks; 4 WH 93-A motors (75 hp); K-14B control. Ex-GF&OD 7-8. No. 8 wrecked 1912; No. 7 off roster by 1913, probably wrecked.
- 9 Single-truck city streetcar; American Car Co., 1896. Length 26'6"; 30 seats. Peckham 7-B truck; 2 GE 1000 motors (25 hp); hand brakes. Ex-Wash.Ry. & Elec. Co. 197; bought by GF&OD 1911 as spare for Aqueduct Bridge service. Out of service by 1923, body later used as shed at Rosslyn shop; officially retired 1930.
- 10 City streetcar; Southern Car Co., 1907. Length 36'7"; 36 seats. Wason 21 trucks; 2 WH 101-B motors (40 hp); K-27 control. Originally GF&OD first #9, re# 10 in 1909. Built for Aqueduct Bridge service. Originally had longitudinal seats and curved sides. Rebuilt 1911 with straight sides, transverse seats, and new air brakes. Later used at times in Washington-Bluemont Jct. local services. Out of service 1928; retired c.1930.
- 11 Wood coach; GF&OD Rosslyn shop, 1911. Length 42'6"; 52 seats. Standard C50 trucks; 4 WH 93-A2 motors (75 hp); HL control. Rebuilt from 1878 open-platform elevated coach acquired by GF&OD 1906; trucks and motors probably from wrecked 1911 Jewett car 13. Scrapped 1918, with equipment probably going to freight motor 25.
- 12-15 Wood coach; Jewett Car Co., 1911. Length 42'6"; 44 seats. Standard C50 trucks; 4 WH 93-A2 motors (75 hp), HL (m.u.) control. Train doors. Ex-GF&OD 12-15. No. 13 wrecked on delivery 1911, with equipment probably used for No. 11 above. No. 14 scrapped 1922 after wreck; 12 and 15 scrapped 1933.
- 16-17 Wood coach, ex-W&OD 1-2 above, renumbered 1917. Scrapped 1933.
- 41-44 Steel & wood combine; Southern Car Co., 1912. Length 50'; 38 seats. Standard C50P trucks; 4 WH 306 motors (60 hp); HL (m.u.) control. Train doors. Built for Bluemont Div. service. Nos. 41-42 originally had small RPO compartments. No. 44 rebuilt as RPO-express motor car c.1930. Nos. 41-43 scrapped 1941-45. No. 44 in service as an electric car into 1942, then used as diesel-hauled trailer until c.1944. Body sold 1946.
- 71-76 Steel & wood coach; Southern Car Co., 1912. Length 50'; 52 seats. Standard C50P trucks; 4 WH 306 motors (60 hp); HL (m.u.) control. Train doors. Built for Bluemont Div.; also used on Great Falls Div. on special occasions. Scrapped 1938-40 (some bodies sold).
- 80-82 Steel coach; J.G.Brill 1918. Length 48'; 52 seats. Brill MCB2X trucks; K-14B control. 4 WH 93-A2 motors. Ex-Washington-Virginia Ry. trailers 361, 365, and 367; bought by W&OD 1923 and motorized, probably using equipment from wrecked ex-GF&OD cars. Assigned primarily to Great Falls Div. Scrapped 1935-36 (some bodies sold).
- 83-87 Steel coach; J.G.Brill 1918. Length 48'; 52 seats. Brill MCB2X trucks; 4 WH 306CB motors; HL control. Originally Washington-Virginia Ry.- MtVA&W 303, 304, 309, 310, and 312 (not renumbered in order). Bought by 1933 for use on Great Falls Div. Scrapped 1934-36 (some bodies sold). Nos. 86-87 never renumbered or used.
- 200-206 Steel & wood trailer coach; Southern Car Co., 1912. Open platforms. Length 42'; 42 seats. Standard C50P trucks. Built for Bluemont Div. train operation with motor cars 41-44 and 71-76, and express motors 300-301. No. 202 refitted as 24-seat parlor car "Blue Ridge" 1928. All scrapped 1933-36.

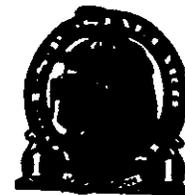
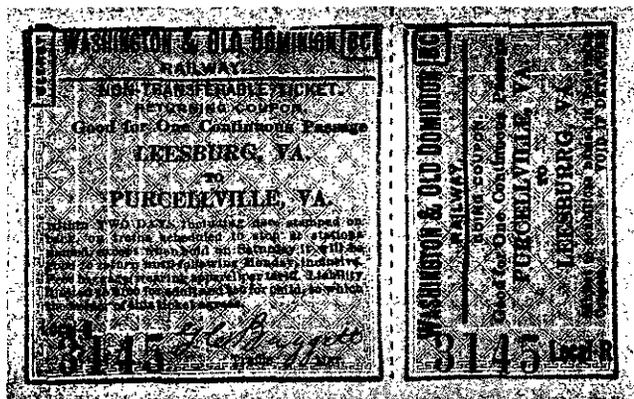
## ELECTRIC FREIGHT LOCOMOTIVES AND EXPRESS MOTORS

- 25 Wood freight motor; W&OD Rosslyn shop, 1918. Length 40'6". Standard C60P trucks; 4 WH 93-A2 motors (75 hp); HL control. Rebuilt from boxcar body, probably using equipment from scrapped coach 11, which originally may have come from wrecked Jewett car 13. Sold to Potomac Edison Co. (Hagerstown & Frederick Ry.) as H&F 9, 1943; scrapped c. 1953.
- 26 Wood freight motor; W&OD Rosslyn shop, 1919. Length 37'. Wason 25 trucks; 4 WH 93-A2 motors (75 hp); HL control. Built from boxcar body with equipment from wrecked passenger cars. Retired 1944; scrapped 1946.
- 50 Steel center-cab locomotive; Baldwin-Westinghouse 1920, c.n. 53784. Length 36'6"; Baldwin trucks; 4 WH 562D5 motors (100 hp); weight 50 tons. Retired 1945; sold 1947 to Cedar Rapids & Iowa City (#58); to Kansas City & Kaw Valley (#507) 1956; to Iowa Terminal (#53) 1962; to Iowa Traction (1987 successor to Iowa Term.) #50.
- 51 Steel center-cab locomotive; Baldwin-Westinghouse 1922, c.n. 39866. Identical to 50 above. Sold 1943 to Cornwall Street Ry., Cornwall, Ontario as #10.
- 100 Wood express motor; Cincinnati Car Co., 1906. Length 37'6". Ex GF&OD 100; see GF&OD roster for original equipment. Rebuilt 1913 with Wason 25 trucks, 4 WH 93-A2 motors, and K-14B control from wrecked car 7 or 8. Wrecked and scrapped 1922.
- 300-301 Wood express motor; Southern Car Co., 1912. Length 41'. Standard C50P trucks; 4 WH 306 motors (60 hp); HL (m.u.) control. Train doors. Built for Bluemont Div; could run m.u. with passenger cars 41-44 and 71-76. No. 301 de-motorized in 1919-24 period. No. 300 burned 1930; 301 retired 1931 and used as shed at Rosslyn..

## STEAM LOCOMOTIVES

- 1-2 2-8-0; Baldwin Loco. Works 12/12; c.n.38950-51. Drivers 50"; cyls. 19"x24"; tractive effort 26,460 lbs; engine weight 128,000 lbs. Sold 1919 to South Georgia R.R. via Birmingham Rail & Loco. W&OD #1 became S.G.105, scrapped 1932; # 2 became S.G. 104, scrapped c.1940.

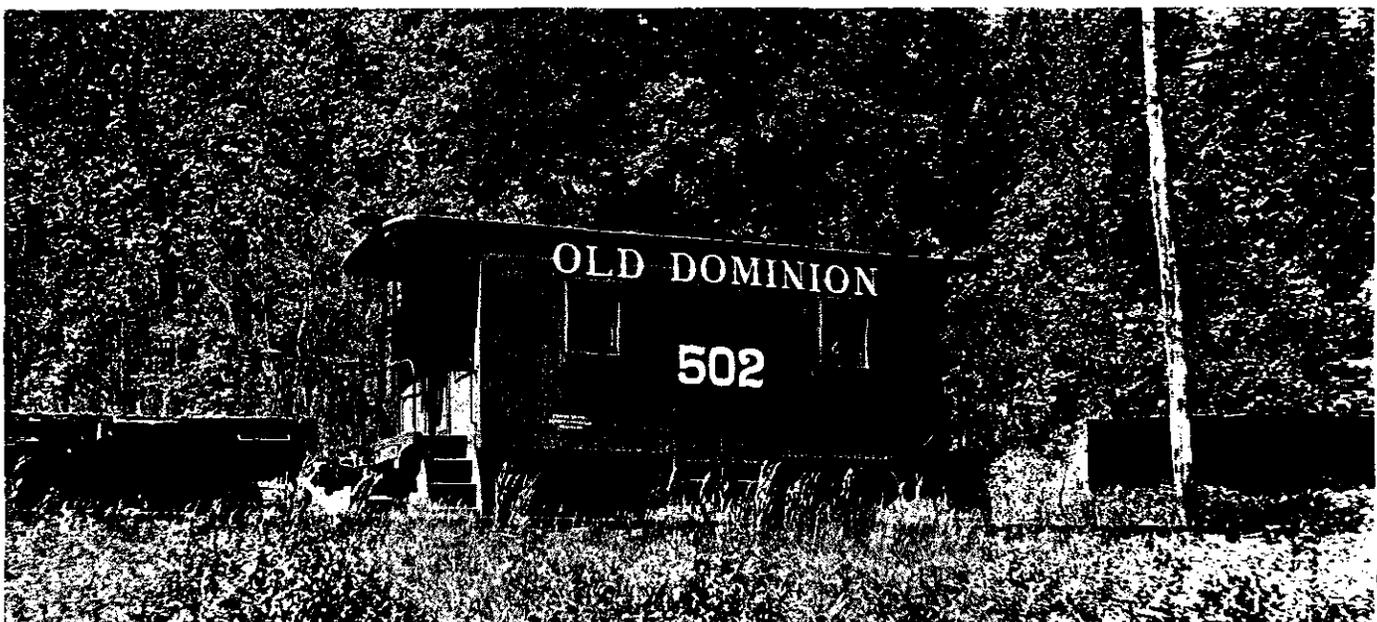
During the first several months of W&OD operation in 1912, service on the former Southern Ry. Bluemont Branch was operated with leased Southern steam power. Engines used were 2-8-0 types #76, 77, 120, and 4-6-0 types #920, 923, 924, 925, 3310, and 3337.



## FREIGHT CARS, CABOOSES AND MISCELLANEOUS EQUIPMENT

Between about 1916 and the mid-1930s the W&OD owned a varying number of standard railroad freight cars which were listed as compatible for railroad interchange service. Little is known about about their origins, appearance, use, or disposition, but it is likely that all were wood-bodied cars obtained secondhand from other railroads and probably primarily used in on-line services. The gondolas may have been used in sand, gravel, and stone service, and boxcars for less-than-carload freight and milk. Several cars survived into the 1940s as work cars or for materials storage.

- 30 Wood double-door express car; length 53'3". Reportedly ex-Washington Southern (RF&P); used in milk service. Retired c.1933; used for storage at Bluemont Jct. until scrapped 1946.
- 601-603 Flatcars; 35'7" length; 30-ton capacity. Acquired c.1916; 601, 603 off roster by 1918; 602 retired 1922.
- 604-606 Flatcars; 35' outside length; 30-ton cap. Acquired 1925-27 and used into 1930s; 605 in m.of w. service until scrapped in 1947.
- 701-710 Gondolas; 35'7" outside length; 40-ton cap. Acquired c.1916, reputedly ex-PRR; retired c.1922
- 801 Boxcar; 36'4" outside length; 30-ton cap. Acquired c.1916, on roster in early 1930s.
- 1000-1009 Gondolas; 36'8" outside length; 40-ton cap. Acquired c.1920; 1003-7 gone c.1924; 1002, 1008 off roster c.1930; 1000, 1009 remained in early 1930s.
- 2000-2001 Boxcars; 40'11" outside length; 30-ton cap. Acquired c.1920; 2001 off roster c.1930. One of these cars, with faded "Michigan Central" lettering, used as storage shed at Bluemont Jct. until scrapped in 1946.
- 3000-3001 Box (Milk); 42'6" outside length; 40-ton
  - 501 Caboose; 40' double truck, ex-boxcar. Acquired c.1919; off roster c.1926-27.
  - 502 Caboose, single-truck. Acquired c.1926-27, ex-RF&P(?), retired 1934.
- 104, 106 Maintenance of way camp cars; former 1878 Manhattan Ry. elevated coaches from GF&OD (see GF&OD roster). No. 104 scrapped 1946.
  - 1 Steel portable substation, built by Westinghouse 1912, Scrapped 1947.
  - 2 Portable substation, built by W&OD shop 1920 using flatcar body.



The W&OD owned two cabooses during its lifetime. The second, single-trucker No. 502, was relatively short-lived. Reportedly secondhand from the RF&P, it first appeared on the roster in the late 1920s but was retired by 1934. (B. D. Fales)

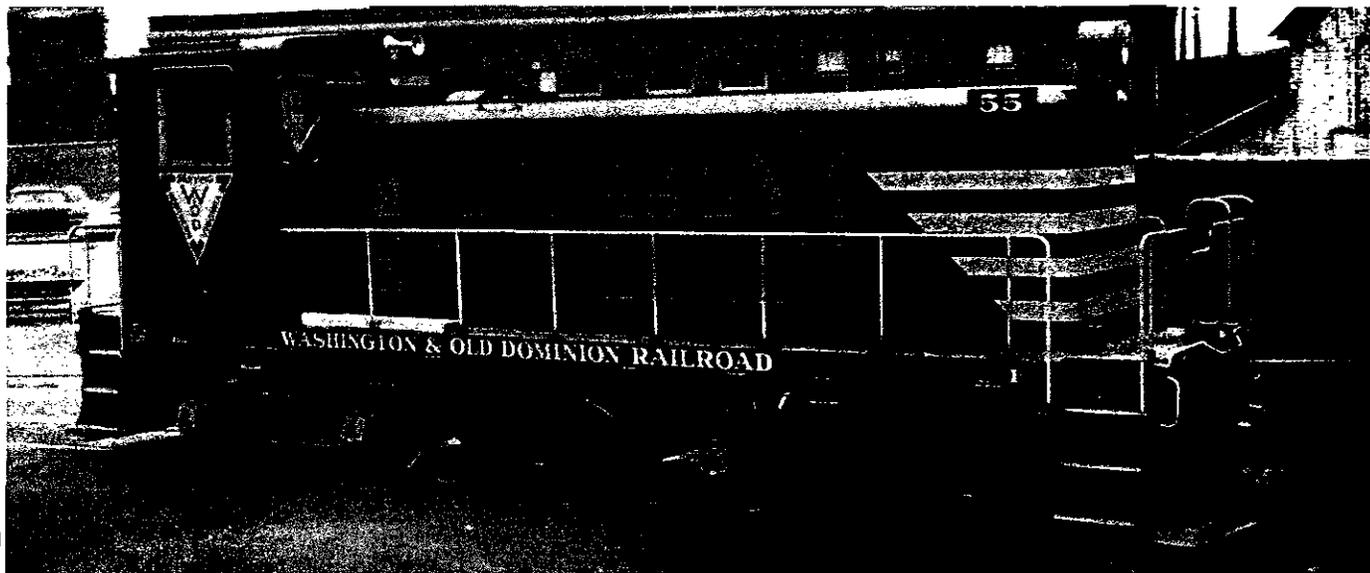
## DIESEL LOCOMOTIVES

- 47 GE 44-ton (380 hp); built 12/41; c.n. 15041. W&OD's first diesel. Sold 1950 to Fonda, Johnstown & Gloversville (#30); resold to Cargill, Inc., Houston, Texas 1967.
- 48 GE 44-ton (380 hp); built 8/42; c.n. 15042. Sold 3/48 to American Smelting & Refining (ASARCO), Characas, Mexico.
- 49 GE 44-ton (380 hp); built 8/42; c.n. 15043. Sold 3/51 to W.A.Smith Contracting Co., Plymouth, Wash. (#49); to Middle Fork R.R. (#2) c.1963; to Seminole Rock Products, Miami, Fla.
- 53 Whitcomb 65-ton (600 hp); built 11/43; c.n. 60344. Ex-U.S.Army 7974; bought by W&OD 10/46 via WAA. Repowered with 2 Cummins L-600 engines 10/49. Sold 10/59 to unknown private firm in southern Ohio.
- 54 Whitcomb 65-ton (600 hp); built 3/44; c.n. 60418. Ex-U.S.Army 8412; bought by W&OD 3/47 via WAA. Sold 3/52 to Nello L. Teer Co., Cherry Point, N.C.
- 55 Whitcomb 75-ton (660 hp); built 11/50, c.n. 60829. Originally built by Canadian Loco. Co. 1948 (c.n. 2426) as Canadian National 7818. Returned to builder and subsequently rebuilt by Whitcomb. Bought "new" by W&OD 1950; retired and sold for scrap 1968.
- 56 General Electric 70-ton (600 hp); built 11/50; c.n. 31174. Bought new; traded to Striegel Supply & Equipment, Baltimore, 7/66 for No. 58. Nos. 56-57 m.u. equipped and ran together.
- 57 GE 70-ton (600 hp); built 3/56; c.n. 32509. Bought new; on roster until abandonment; sold 1968 to Striegel Supply & Equipment, Baltimore.
- 58 GE 44-ton (380 hp); built 6/45; c.n. 29965. Ex-Pennsylvania R.R. 9332; acquired 1966 from Striegel Supply & Equipment in trade for #56. Equipped for m.u. operation with #57. On roster until abandonment; sold 1968 to Striegel.

In 1945 the W&OD leased U.S.Army 65-ton Whitcomb 8451 and in 1946 it leased USA 44-ton GE 7167 pending arrival of its No. 53.

Between 1959 and 1968 the W&OD leased various C&O Alco S-2 1000 hp switchers, specifically C&O Nos. 5000 (9160), 5006 (9162), 5009, 5011, 5012, 5015, and 5102. Generally two or three were on the property at a time. All were m.u. equipped and ran in multiples of up to three units.

In its final year, W&OD leased B&O EMD SW-1 #8413 in Spring 1968 to replace 57; this in turn was replaced by B&O Alco S-1 #9155 in June 1968. The 9155 was the last operating diesel on the W&OD.



Whitcomb 75-tonner No. 55 had a checkered past but was a W&OD stalwart into the 1960s. Rosslyn, January 1951. (H. H. Harwood, Jr.)

## SELF-PROPELLED PASSENGER CARS

- 45 Gas-electric passenger-baggage combine; built 1928 by Osgood-Bradley-Mack as New York Central M-14. O-B c.n. 9115; Mack c.n. 161001. Length 76'6"; 65 seats. 2 Mack AP 120 hp engines; GE drive. Originally Mack demonstrator M-200. Bought by W&OD 1943; repowered 1946 with 2 Cummins 200 hp diesel engines. Rebuilt 1949 with RPO compartment from 46. Scrapped 1952.
- 46 Gas-electric passenger-baggage-RPO combine; built 1926 by Electro-Motive Corp.- St.Louis Car Co.; EMC c.n. 155, St.Louis c.n. 1403. Length 73'; 40 seats. Winton 106A engine (220 hp), GE drive. Originally Mobile & Ohio 1801, then GM&O 1801. Bought by W&OD 11/43. Disabled early in its career and operated as diesel-hauled trailer. RPO compartment transferred to 45 in 1949 and car scrapped 1950.
- 52 Gas-electric passenger-baggage-RPO combine; built 1928 by J.G.Brill; c.n.22544. Brill Model 250. Length 75'6"; 40 seats. Brill 250 hp engine; GE drive. Originally New York Central M-203; to NYC M-403. Bought by W&OD 1944. Rebuilt with Cummins 250 hp diesel engine 1946. Scrapped 1951.
- 4688-4689 Two-car gas-electric train; built by E.G.Budd Co. 1932 (no c.n.) as Pennsylvania R.R. 4688-89. Length of each car 50'. No. 4688 had baggage section and 30 seats; No. 4689 had 46 seats. Each car originally powered with one 125 hp Cummins diesel engine and equipped with Michelin-patent rubber tires. Re-engined 1936 with 190 hp Lycoming gas engine in 4688 and 28 hp auxiliary in 4689; rubber tires replaced with steel wheels at an unknown date. Leased by W&OD in 1943, bought 1945; scrapped 1949.

## MISCELLANEOUS EQUIPMENT

In 1939 the W&OD acquired four unique Evans Auto-Railer vehicles from the deceased Arlington & Fairfax Auto R. R. (formerly the Arlington & Fairfax Ry.) for maintenance uses. These were originally built in 1937 as convertible rail-highway passenger buses by the Evans Products Co. Two cannot be precisely identified and may have been owned by Evans (which controlled the A&F at that time) rather than the A&F itself.

- 95 Flatbed truck; details unknown; may have been rebuilt from passenger bus.
- 96-97 Former 19-passenger buses; Ford engine; ex-A&F 113-114. Retained bus body and rebuilt as line cars.
- [98] Former passenger bus, details unknown. Lettered "Evans Auto Railer", thus may have been owned by Evans rather than A&F. Apparently never relettered or used by W&OD.



One of the odder creatures on the W&OD's roster—or anyone's roster—was this Evans auto-railer passenger bus, used by the W&OD for line maintenance. The hybrid rail-highway vehicle was an abortive attempt by the neighboring Arlington & Fairfax electric line to utilize its trackage in Arlington and Fairfax counties but enter Washington over the road from Rosslyn. The idea was stymied by legal action and the A&F rail system was abandoned in 1939. (L. W. Rice)

WASHINGTON & OLD DOMINION STATION LIST  
1916

(A) = Agency Station  
(S) = Passing siding on single track  
(SS) = Electric Substation  
(W) = Water tank (for steam locomotives, until 1919)  
(X) = Crossover on double track (primarily for turning back trains)  
(Y) = Wye track (for reversing locomotives)

BLUEMONT DIVISION

(Double track Rosslyn-Bluemont Junction; single track west of Bluemont Junction)

	Miles from Rosslyn	Miles from Alexandria*
Georgetown, D.C. (A) .....	0.3	
Rosslyn (A) .....	0.0	11.6
Colonial (Lamden Terr., later Nash St.) (X) .....	0.2	
Mackeys .....	0.6	
Park Lane .....	0.9	
Pearce .....	1.2	
Clark .....	1.4	
Thrifton (Great Falls Div. junction) .....	1.7	8.8
Hayes .....	2.1	
Douglas .....	2.4	
Clements Ave. ....	2.6	
Clarendon .....	2.7	
Lacey (Washington-Virginia Ry. overpass) .....	3.0	
Garrison .....	3.6	
Bon Air .....	4.2	
Bluemont Junction (Beginning of Southern Railway leased line) (SS) (Y) .....	4.5	7.1
Torrison (originally Torreyson) (S) .....	4.7	
Fostoria .....	5.5	
Falls Church (East Falls Church) (A) (S) .....	6.5	9.2
Rothsay .....	7.3	
West Falls Church (A) (S) (orig. West End) .....	7.7	10.4
Evans .....	8.2	
Green .....	9.3	
Dunn Loring (A) (S) .....	9.8	12.6
Wedderburn .....	10.8	
Franklin .....	11.1	
Vienna: Park Street .....	12.0	
Church Street .....	12.3	
Station (A) (S) (SS**) (W) .....	12.4	5.1
Clarks Crossing .....	14.0	
Piney .....	14.4	
Lowland .....	14.7	
Hunter (S) .....	15.3	
Pinecrest .....	17.3	
Wiehle (later Sunset Hills) (A) (S) .....	18.4	21.1
Thornton .....	19.1	
Jackson .....	19.5	
Coral .....	20.3	
Herndon (A) (S) (SS) (Y) .....	20.6	23.3
Herndon Heights .....	21.6	

	Miles from Rosslyn	Miles from Alexandria*
Oak Grove .....	22.0	
Lynn .....	22.3	
Buchanan .....	23.3	
Sterling (A) (S) (originally Guilford) .....	24.1	26.8
Smiths (S) .....	25.8	
Normans .....	26.3	
Ashburn (A) (S) (originally Farmwell) .....	28.1	30.8
Graves .....	28.9	
Belmont Park .....	30.1	
Trap Rock .....	30.5	
Compher .....	31.4	
Pleasant View .....	31.9	
Lawson .....	33.4	
Leesburg (A) (S) (SS) (W) (Y) .....	34.7	37.4
Dry Mill .....	36.1	
Clarke's Gap (A) (S) .....	38.4	41.1
Paeonian Springs (A) (S) .....	39.2	
Hamilton (A) (S) .....	41.0	43.7
Ivendale .....	42.0	
Florance .....	43.8	
Purcellville (A) (S) .....	44.6	47.3
Simmons .....		
Round Hill (A) (S) (SS) .....	47.6	50.3
Scotland Heights Homestead		
Bluemont (A) (S) (W) (Y) .....	51.7	54.4

\* All Alexandria mileages are shown from the original AL&H Fairfax St. station, although the line east of Potomac Yard (milepost 1) was owned by Southern Ry. and never leased to the W&OD. The W&OD offered both passenger and freight service to the Alexandria terminal, however; its cars were moved over this segment by Southern power. The W&OD adopted the original Southern Railway milepost designations, so that all its official mileages were calculated from the Alexandria terminal point.

\*\* Portable substation generally located at Vienna during the 1920s. In 1935 substation equipment from Spring Hill on the abandoned Great Falls Division was relocated to Vienna.



Passenger-baggage-express combine No. 6, a 1906 Southern Car Co. product, was one of the GF&OD's original fleet, and among its varied jobs was carrying the mails to McLean and Cherrydale. Its life was about to end when it posed at Rosslyn in September 1934. (J. P. Shuman)

**GREAT FALLS DIVISION**  
(Entirely double track until early 1930s)

	Miles from Rosslyn
Thrifton (Junction with Bluemont Div.) .....	1.7
Domnion Heights .....	2.1
Cherrydale (X) .....	2.3
Harrison .....	2.6
Greenwood .....	2.7
Maplewood .....	3.0
Livingstone Heights .....	3.3
Lyonhurst .....	3.4
Summit .....	3.5
Rixey .....	3.6
Jewell .....	3.9
Vanderwerken (X) .....	4.2
Franklin Park .....	4.9
Rockwell .....	5.1
Chesterbrook .....	5.4
El Nido .....	5.9
Selva .....	6.3
Viresco .....	6.5
Lawnvale McLean (X) .....	7.1
Ingleside .....	7.4
Ball's Hill .....	8.1
Hitaffer .....	9.2
Jackson .....	9.4
Spring Hill (SS) (X) .....	10.2
Prospect Hill (originally Carper's) .....	10.8
Belleview .....	11.1
Glendale (originally Rocky Run) .....	11.6
Peacock .....	12.2
Fairview (Difficult Run) .....	12.4
Elkins (X) .....	12.8
Dickey's Road .....	13.6
Great Falls (X + loop track) .....	13.8

**ALEXANDRIA BRANCH**  
(Entirely single track)

	Miles from Alexandria*
Alexandria - Fairfax St. (Southern Ry.) (W) .....	0.0
Potomac Yard (Beginning of W&OD) .....	1.0
Alexandria Junction (S) .....	1.8
St. Elmo (Washington-Virginia Ry. passes under) .....	2.2
Cowdon .....	4.0
Barcroft (Columbia Pike) (S) (originally Arlington Mills) .....	5.4
Glencarlyn .....	6.6
Bluemont Junction (Junction with Bluemont Div.) (S) .....	7.1

# HOTELS AND BOARDING HOUSES in the BLUE RIDGE MOUNTAINS

along the

## Washington and Old Dominion Railway

No responsibility is assumed for changes or variations that may be made by the proprietors or managers of the hotels or boarding houses named

NAME	TERMS AND OTHER INFORMATION	NAME	TERMS AND OTHER INFORMATION
<b>Bluemont, Va.</b> J. M. Morcland	Located on mountain overlooking the Loudoun Valley; modern conveniences; excellent board. Rates on application.	<b>Round Hill, Va.</b> Fannie Wynkoop	Terms on application.
H. Rathbone Smith	Accommodations for several guests on large estate located on mountain; meals at owner's residence close to main house; reasonable rates; references required.	Maud Wynkoop	Terms on application.
A. L. Longerbeam	Best country board; terms moderate.	T. W. Best	Near town. Terms on application.
Mrs. Millard Patterson	Excellent board; chicken, milk, fresh eggs; home garden. Terms \$2.00 per day; \$10.00 and \$12.00 per week.	Mollie Copeland	Terms on application.
"The Heights" Mrs. T. P. Simpson Proprietress	Modern conveniences; splendid home cooking. Terms moderate.	Edw. Finnell	Terms on application.
Mrs. M. A. Elsea	Located on mountain. Terms \$2.50 per day; \$12.00 per week. Meals and lunches.	<b>Purcellville, Va.</b> "The Bell Inn" Mrs. M. H. Beall Proprietress	Modern conveniences; plenty shade; lawn; garden vegetables. Terms \$3.00 per day; \$30.00 per month.
"The Loudoun" J. C. Beatty Proprietor	Large lawn; tennis. Comfortable rooms, porches, etc. Terms: Single rooms, \$15.00 per week; double rooms, \$12.00 per person per week.	"The White Cottage" Miss Rebecca Lloyd Proprietress	Near town. Excellent table. Terms on application.
<b>Round Hill, Va.</b> "Baldwin House"	Terms on application.	Mrs. E. Shoemaker R. F. D. No. 2	Near town. Large shady lawn; fresh vegetables. Terms on application.
F. P. Lowe	Near town. Terms on application.	Mrs. Alice Corder	Near station. Modern conveniences. Terms on application.
E. L. Donohoe	Terms on application.	<b>Hamilton, Va.</b> Mrs. J. W. Chamberlin	Large shady lawn; fresh vegetables; milk; cream; eggs. Modern conveniences; excellent table. Terms \$10.00 to \$12.00 per week.
		<b>Leesburg, Va.</b> "Leesburg Inn"	Located in business section. A delightful place to spend day and week-end vacations. Special Sunday chicken dinners.
		Mrs. Fulton	Near town. Modern country home. Delightful meals; terms on application.

Electric Trains leave from Rosslyn Terminal Station (Washington), located South End Key Bridge, on Frequent Schedules.

This undated tourist folder most likely was published soon after the W&OD opened its new Rosslyn terminal station in 1923.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS AND REFERENCES

Like its subject, this book has undergone several metamorphoses, beginning with a crude first attempt in 1963 and a revised and updated edition in 1969, shortly after the railroad's abandonment. This latest version unashamedly takes advantage of much that has been uncovered since then, but remains based on the work of people who gave their help and support decades ago—many of them, sadly, now deceased. I was particularly indebted to Harold H. Swain of Washington and John F. Burns of Arlington, who collaborated in uncovering much of the railroad's early history, and to David Marcham, former W&OD treasurer, who provided the invaluable use of company files as well as maps, timetables, and a welter of miscellaneous material. More recently, Paul McCray, Manager of the W&OD Railroad Regional Park, made available the massive amount of documentary material, photos, and employee reminiscences that he has accumulated on the railroad's history. Also generous in giving help were: George Abdill, W. C. Benson, Harold Buckley, Raymond B. Carneal, Bob Cohen, Gerald F. Cunningham, Henry H. Douglas, E. Everett Edwards, Charles E. Fisher, LeRoy O. King, Sr., LeRoy O. King, Jr., Thomas Lawson, Jr., Charles B. Thomas, Frank Tosh, Donald Traser, Thomas Underwood, and Ames W. Williams.

Felix E. Reifschneider, a retired transit manager and traction enthusiast, acted as editor, advisor and publisher for the first edition of this work. Henry H. Douglas of Falls Church, an intensely dedicated amateur historian and founder of the Pioneer America Society, handled the book's republication by the Pioneer America Society in 1969—and contributed the fruits of his own research and photography as well. Paul McCray of the W&OD Railroad Regional Park was responsible for its latest rebirth, and the Pioneer America Society graciously relinquished its earlier copyright to make this third edition possible.

Students of the "Old Dominion's" history will also be interested Ames W. Williams' *Washington & Old Dominion Railroad*, originally published by Capital Traction Quarterly (Springfield, VA) in 1970 and reprinted with additions by Meridian Sun Press, Alexandria, VA, in 1984. Williams covers much the same territory as this book, but with differences in detail and emphasis; he is particularly strong on the railroad's earlier years and the Civil War period. Some of the line's earliest history is related

in Fairfax Harrison's privately printed *Landmarks of Old Prince William* and in his *A History of the Legal Development of the Railroad System of the Southern Railway Company* (1901). Harrison was an amateur historian but more pertinently was also a lawyer for the Southern and its president from 1913 to 1937.

In varying degrees of detail, three other books give some sense of how the railroad fitted into—or did not fit into—late 19th century railroad power politics: John F. Stover's *Railroads of the South, 1865-1900: A Study in Finance and Control* (University of North Carolina Press, 1955), Maury Klein's *The Great Richmond Terminal* (Eleutherian Mills-Hagley Foundation and University of Virginia Press, 1970), and Mason Y. Cooper's *Norfolk & Western's Shenandoah Valley Line* (Norfolk & Western Historical Society, 1998).

Several articles have covered or touched on the W&OD's history and operations, most notably:

George C. Baggett, "My 34 Years on a Short Line", *Trains*, October 1954

A. D. Hooks, "Washington & Old Dominion", *Railroad Magazine*, October 1949

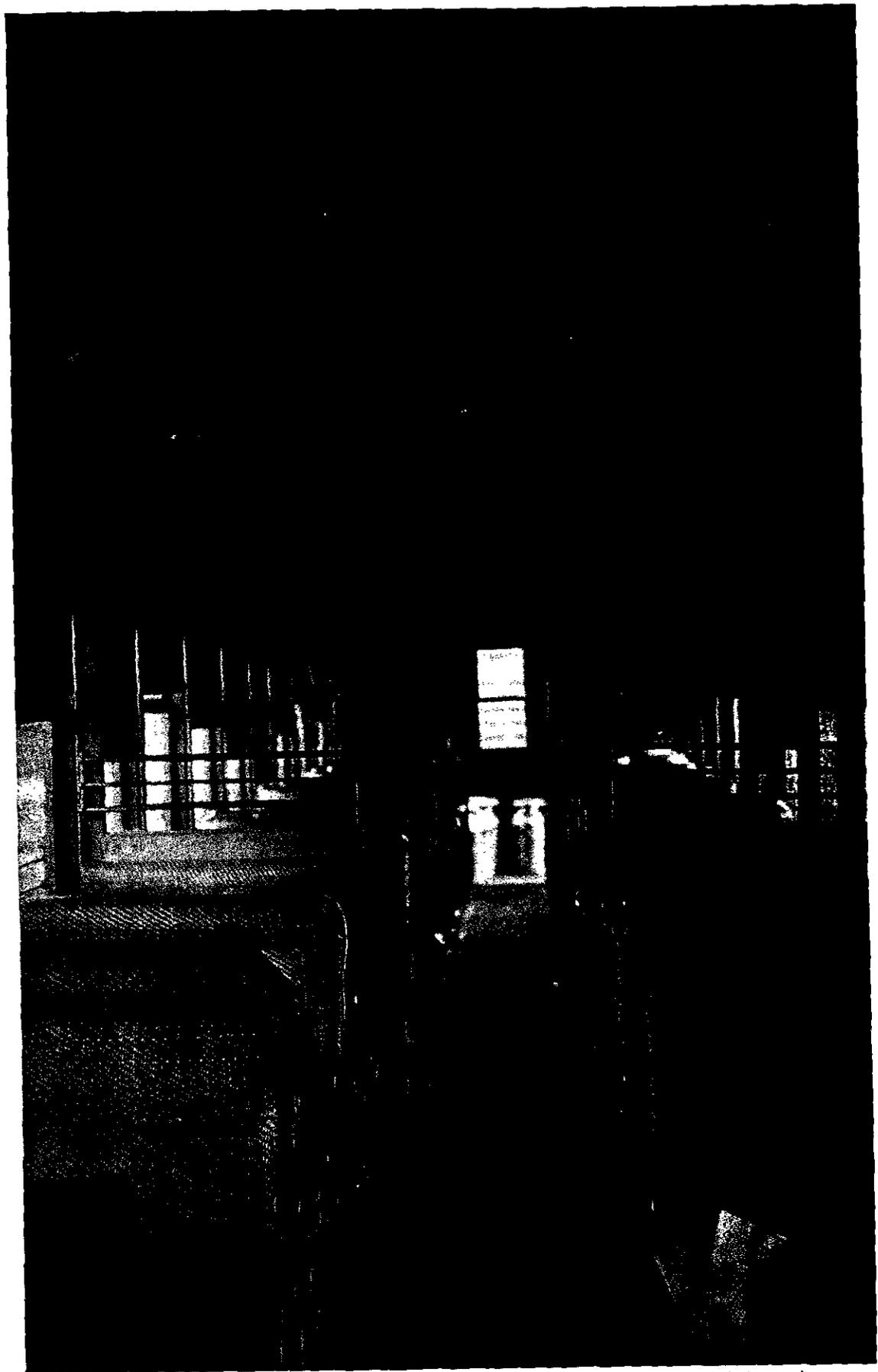
R. H. Estabrook, "Washington & Old Dominion", *Trains*, April 1948

David A. Guillaudeu, "Mail to the Blue Ridge", unpublished article, 1985

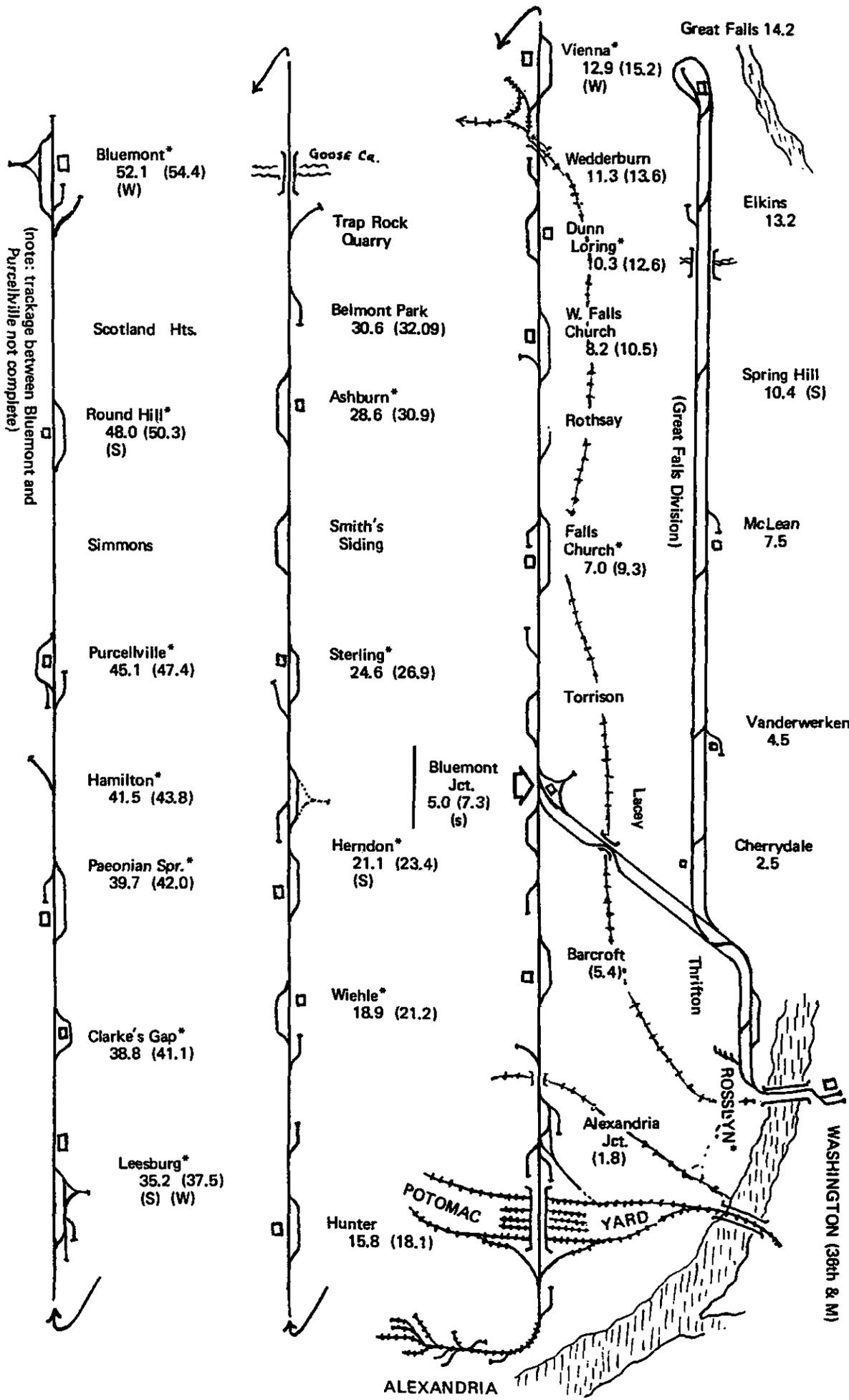
A technical description of the railroad's electric equipment appears in the trade magazine *Electric Railway Journal*, March 22, 1913 (Vol. 41), p. 534, and *Electric Traction*, another trade paper, carried a piece titled Electric Locomotives on the Washington & Old Dominion in Vol. 19 (1923), p. 63. An excellent general treatment of the history of Washington-area railroads, including the W&OD, was written by Charles B. Thomas in *Bulletin 105* of the Railway & Locomotive Historical Society (1961).

Those generally interested in the electric railways in Arlington and Fairfax Counties also should see John E. Merriken's *Old Dominion Trolley Too*, published by LeRoy O. King, Jr., Dallas, Texas, 1987. This work comprehensively covers the system which went by various corporate names including the Washington, Arlington & Falls Church, the Washington-Virginia Ry., and Arlington & Fairfax, parts of which operated close to the W&OD.

Herbert H. Harwood, Jr.



During the electric era, W&OD passengers typically rode in surroundings like those inside interurban coach 76. In the foreground is the smoking compartment, with its hard but durable rattan seats; riders in the non-smoking section beyond sat on genuine leather. Note the milk cans at the car's end. (J. F. Burns)



WASHINGTON & OLD DOMINION RY. - Trackage Diagram as of 1916

(note: trackage between Bluemont and Purcellville not complete)

\* = agency station; (S) = Substation location; (W) = Water facilities  
 First figure indicates mileage from Washington; s (parentheses) is mileage from Alexandria



THE UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON  
PUBLISHED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON PRESS  
1965

ISBN 0-615-11453-9  
EAN  
9 780615 114538

PHYSICAL LOCATION: PUE-2005-00018

# MICROFILM REFERENCE

THE ITEMS DESCRIBED BELOW WERE UNABLE TO BE MICROFILMED DUE TO ITS SIZE OR COMPOSITION.

THE ITEM IS BEING MAINTAINED IN THE SECURE FACILITIES OF THE DOCUMENT CONTROL CENTER.

THE LOCATION OF THE PHYSICAL ITEM IS NOTED ABOVE.

DATE STORED: DECEMBER 1, 2005

ITEM DESCRIPTION: APPENDIX L – COMPACT DISK

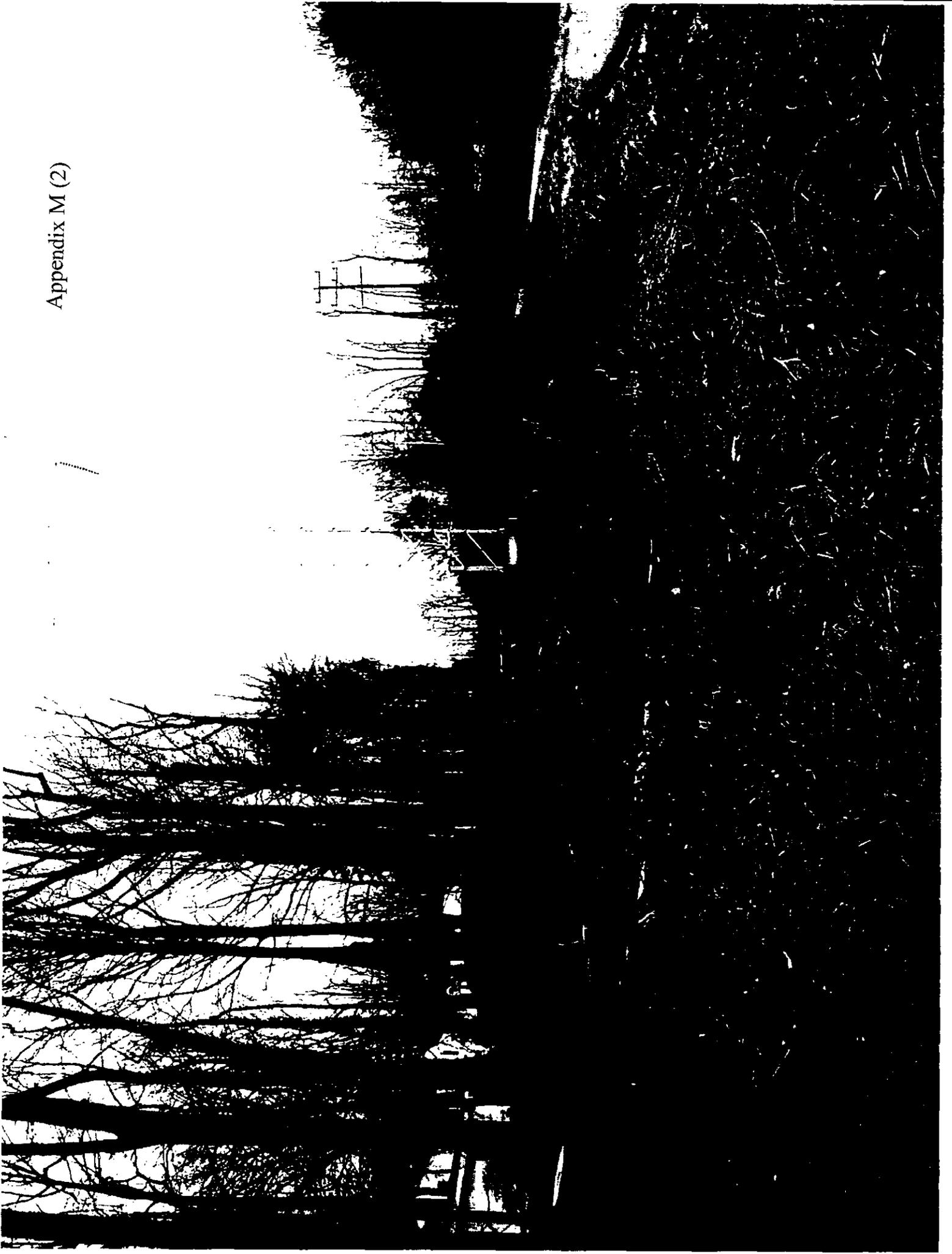
## SCC CASE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Rev 01/20/98

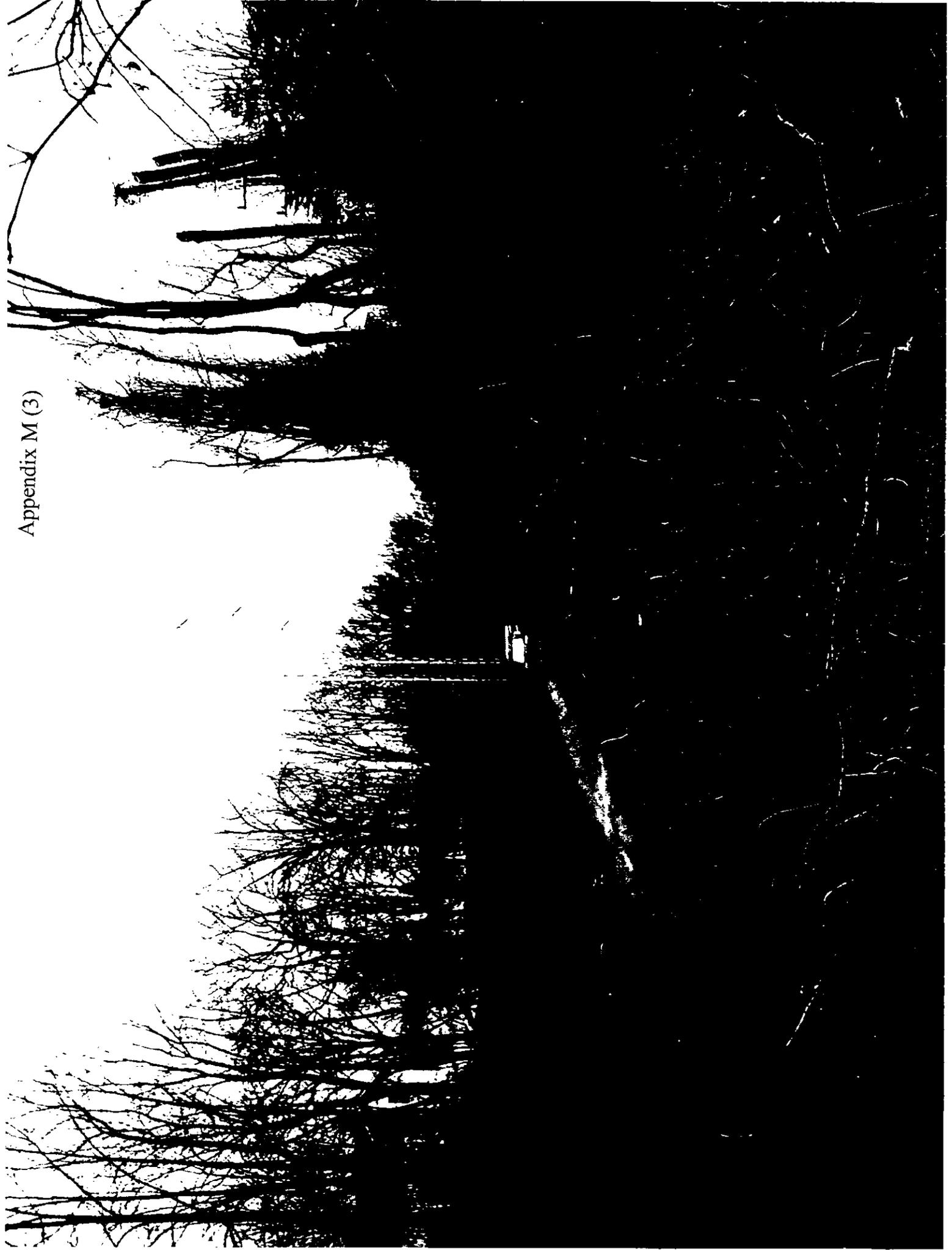
Appendix M (1)



Appendix M (2)

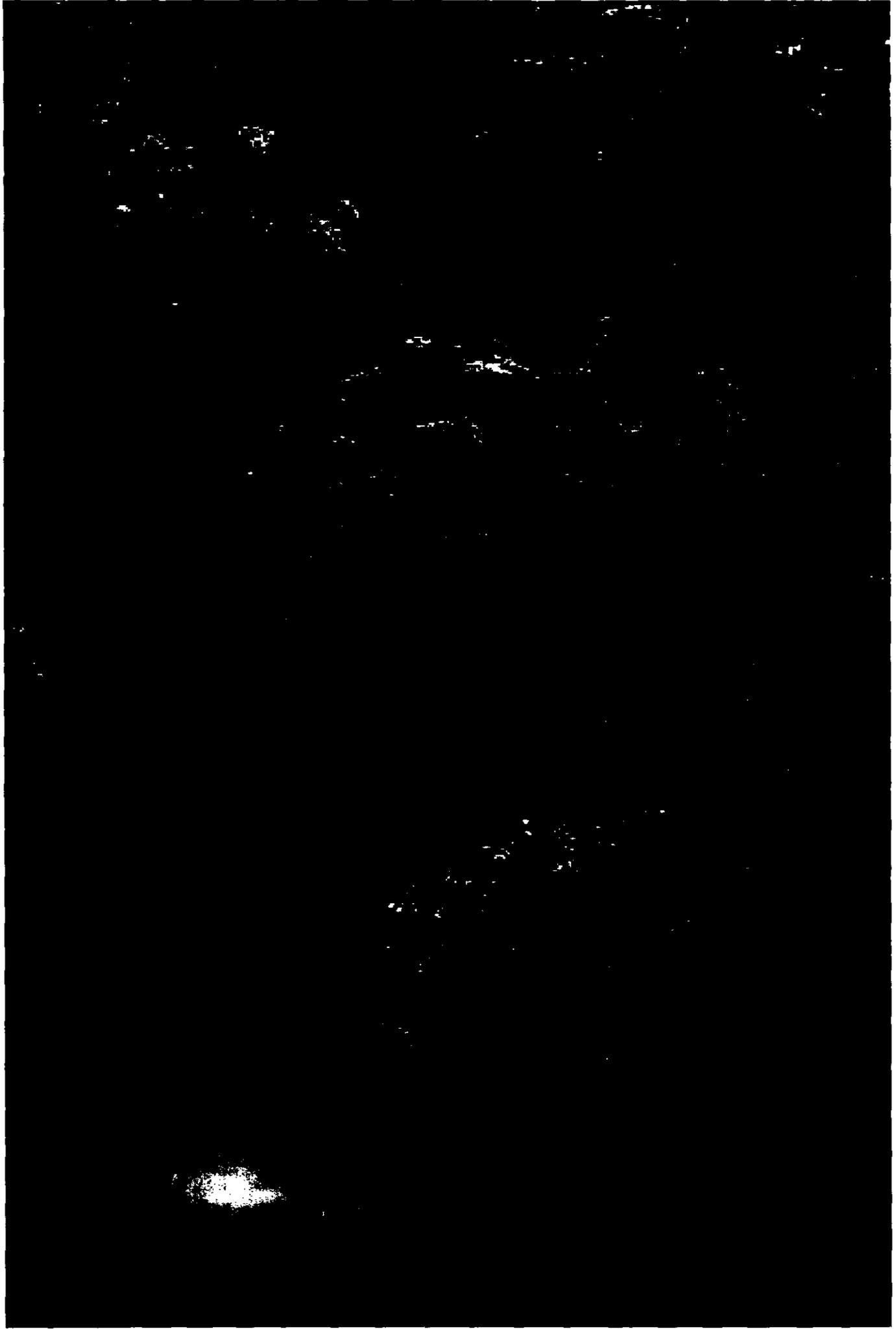


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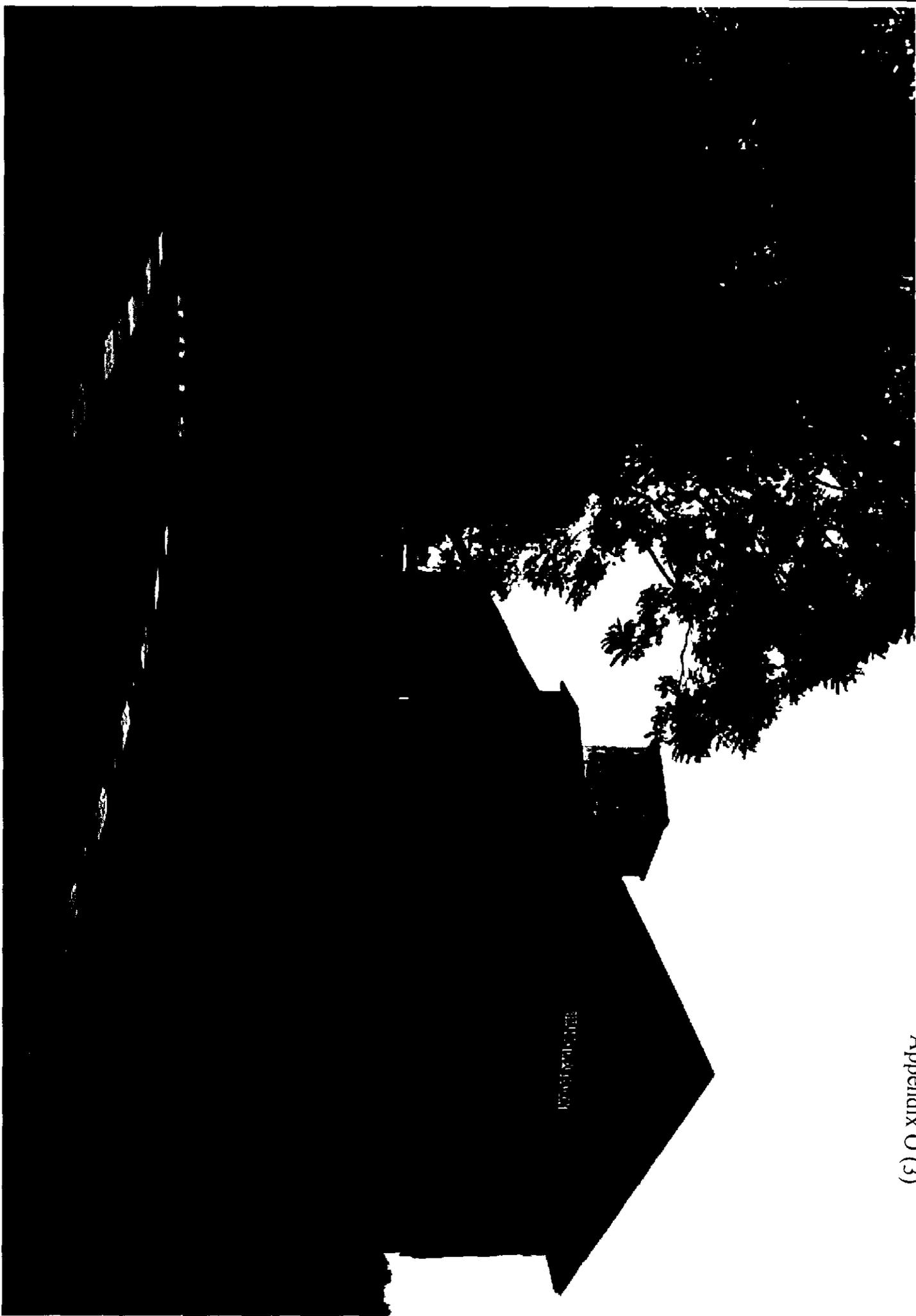








Appendix O (3)



PHYSICAL LOCATION: PUE-2005-00018

# MICROFILM REFERENCE

THE ITEMS DESCRIBED BELOW WERE UNABLE TO BE MICROFILMED DUE TO ITS SIZE OR COMPOSITION.

THE ITEM IS BEING MAINTAINED IN THE SECURE FACILITIES OF THE DOCUMENT CONTROL CENTER.

THE LOCATION OF THE PHYSICAL ITEM IS NOTED ABOVE.

DATE STORED: DECEMBER 1, 2005

ITEM DESCRIPTION: APPENDIX P – VIDEO TAPE

## SCC CASE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Rev 01/20/98

# Notice

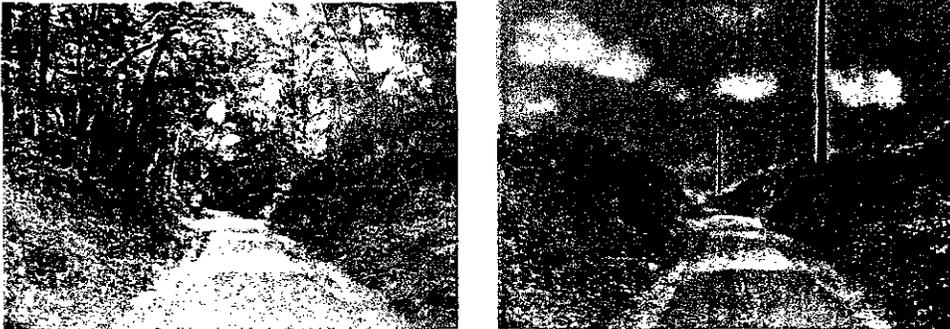
Dominion Virginia Power has begun planning for a new 230,000-volt transmission line in western Loudoun County. At this time, Dominion Power's preferred alignment is the W&OD Trail from the east side of Leesburg to an area east of Purcellville.

Beginning at its Pleasant View Substation off Cochran Mill Road on the east side of Leesburg and ending near Route 287, Purcellville, Dominion Virginia Power would remove most of the trees on the 100-foot wide W&OD Trail property to make way for the lines.

According to Dominion Power, 110-foot tall steel towers set approximately 450-700 feet apart support a typical transmission line of this voltage. During the construction process, significant detours for trail users will be likely and, at times, the trail may have to be closed to all users.

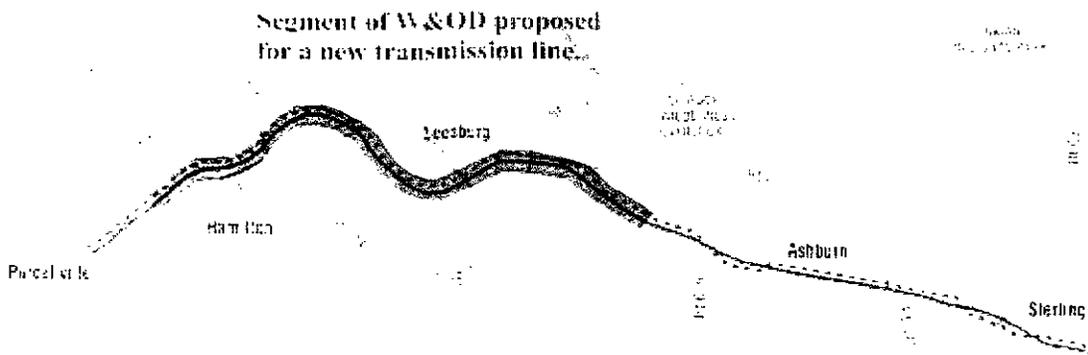
For more information, to learn how you can help the Trail and to be placed on a contact list, visit the Friends of the W&OD website at

**[www.wodfriends.org](http://www.wodfriends.org)** or call 703/729-0596.



Left – a scene from the W&OD Trail east of Paeonian Springs in May 2004

Right – the same scene digitally altered to show the loss of trees if the transmission line were to be placed on the trail property.



**Provided by the Friends of the W&OD Railroad Regional Park**



## Analysis Report



### Washington & Old Dominion Trail

#### Executive Summary

American Forests was asked by Paul McCray, Park Manager for the Washington & Old Dominion Trail, to conduct an analysis on the ecological service benefits provided by the trees along a portion of the trail and the dollar value of the work the existing landcover provides to the environment. The portion of the trail is a 100' wide section extending 11 miles from the eastern border of Leesburg westward, to the eastern border of Purcellville. The trees along this section of the trail may be removed for the addition of power lines needed to provide electricity to Purcellville.

#### Methods Used

The analysis was conducted based solely upon information provided to American Forests by Paul McCray, Park Manager for the Washington & Old Dominion Trail. Typically, American Forests will use aerial or satellite imagery for this purpose, without this detailed data, only approximations can be made. The information provided is that the area along the western end of the trail, measuring 100 feet by 11 miles, is completely tree covered with mature trees which are at risk of being removed. The trees in this area have been growing since the W&OD railroad ceased operations in 1968. This section is equivalent to 133.33 acres. The assumption made was that the all the trees would be removed and replaced with herbaceous land cover. CITYgreen software, developed by American Forests, was used to model this scenario. This report shows the economic benefits that the trees currently provide for air quality, stormwater runoff and carbon storage, and is only an approximation.

#### Findings

Air Quality Benefits: \$ 31,219 annually  
Stormwater Runoff Benefits: \$ 10,125 annually

*The complete findings may be found on the attached report page.*

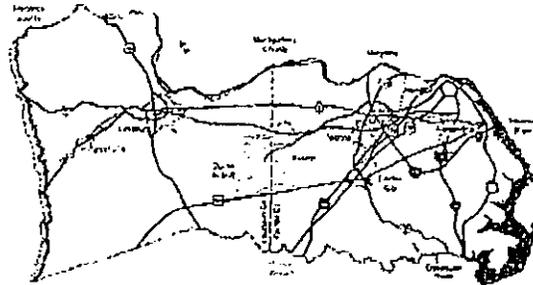
#### Recommendations

American Forests recommends: 1) that the benefits of tree cover should be used for decision-making; 2) that a more comprehensive analysis should be conducted. Loudoun County has extensive GIS (Geographic Information Systems) department which could integrate the CITYgreen software for these purposes; and 3) that a comprehensive analysis, using high-resolution satellite imagery, aerial photographs or on-the-ground tree inventories would provide a more accurate assessment.

**Washington & Old Dominion Trail**

**Site Information**

**Total Area:** 133.33 acres (11 miles x 100 feet)  
**Current Landcover:** Woods, Good Condition, Soil Hydrologic Group B  
**Replacement Landcover:** Herbaceous, Good Condition, Soil Hydrologic Group B



**Air Pollution Removal**

By absorbing and filtering out nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>), sulfur dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>), ozone (O<sub>3</sub>), carbon monoxide (CO), and particulate matter less than 10 microns (PM<sub>10</sub>) in their leaves, urban trees perform a vital air cleaning service that directly affects the well-being of urban dwellers. CITYgreen estimates the annual air pollution removal rate of trees within a defined study area for the pollutants listed below. To calculate the dollar value of these pollutants, economists use "externality" costs, or indirect costs borne by society such as rising health care expenditures and reduced tourism revenue. The actual externality costs used in CITYgreen of each air pollutant is set by the each state, Public Services Commission.

*Nearest Air Quality Reference City: Washington, DC*

	<u>Lbs. Removed/yr</u>	<u>Dollar Value</u>
Carbon Monoxide	576	\$245
Ozone:	4,611	\$14,166
Nitrogen Dioxide	2,406	\$7,392
Particulate Matter:	3,875	\$7,948
Sulfur Dioxide:	1,956	\$1,468
<b>Totals:</b>	<b>13,424</b>	<b>\$ 31,219</b>

**Stormwater**

Trees decrease total stormwater volume and slow peak flow, both help cities to manage their stormwater and decrease detention costs. CITYgreen assesses how land cover, soil type, slope, and precipitation affect stormwater runoff volume, time of runoff concentration, and runoff peak flows. It calculates the volume of runoff in a 2-year 24-hour storm event that would be contained by stormwater facilities if the vegetation were removed. This volume multiplied by local construction costs calculates the dollars saved by the tree canopy. CITYgreen uses the TR-55 model developed by the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) which is very effective in evaluating the effects of land cover/land use changes and conservation practices on stormwater runoff. The infiltration percentage in the report estimates the decrease in ground water recharge when the vegetation is replaced by impervious surface.

**Surface Runoff**

2-yr, 24-hr Rainfall: 3.25 in. Curve Number reflecting existing conditions: 55  
 Rainfall Distribution Type: II Curve Number using modeled landcover: 62

Additional Storage volume needed (to mitigate the change in peak flow): 58,064 cu. ft.  
 Construction cost per cu. ft. \$ 2.00  
**Total Stormwater Value: \$ 116,128**  
**Annual Value (based on payments over 20 years at 6% interest): \$ 10,125**

**Carbon Storage**

Trees remove carbon dioxide from the air through their leaves and store carbon in their biomass. Approximately half of a tree's dry weight, in fact, is carbon. For this reason, large-scale tree planting projects are recognized as a legitimate tool in many national carbon-reduction programs. CITYgreen estimates the carbon storage capacity and of trees within a defined study area.

**Total Tons Stored: 5,734 Tons**

**KATE RUDACILLE**

---

**From:** pmccray@erols.com  
**Sent:** Wednesday, May 26, 2004 8:08 PM  
**To:** KATE RUDACILLE  
**Subject:** Fw: New Transmission Line

X-User: pmccray  
Message-Id: <20040527001805.28B77948A5@texas4.legendum.com>  
Date: Thu, 27 May 2004 00:18:05 +0000 (GMT)  
Return-Path: nobody@texas4.legendum.com  
X-OriginalArrivalTime: 27 May 2004 00:09:58.0281 (UTC)  
FILETIME=[F245AF90:01C4437E]

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Use <http://www.onspeed.com/?A=web2mail> to transform dial up  
connections to near broadband speed. Reccomended by Web2Mail  
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> As customers of Dominion Virginia Power, and frequent bikers on the  
W&OD Trail, we were extremely disturbed to learn of your plans to build  
a new transmission line in western Loudon County that will seriously  
compromise use of the trail and its aesthetic and historic value. As we  
understand the plans for this line, it would require the removal of most  
of the trees along that stretch of the trail and expose slopes along the  
trail to extensive erosion. And, it seems likely that the construction  
involved with installation of this line would cause extensive damage to  
the trail itself.

>

> We hope that you will consider an alternative route for this line, and  
rest assured that, should you persist in seeking this route, we will  
oppose your plans in every way possible.

>

> Sid and Carol Hurlburt

> 2102 Owl's Cove Lane

> Reston, VA 20191

>

>

>

## KATE RUDACILLE

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**From:** W&OD Trail [wodtrail@erols.com]  
**Sent:** Thursday, July 01, 2004 3:40 PM  
**To:** GARY FENTON; KATE RUDACILLE; JULIA CLAYPOOL; TODD HAFNER  
**Subject:** [Fwd: Please oppose Dominion Virginia Power's plan for the W&OD bike trail]

This is a good one.

----- Original Message -----

**Subject:** Please oppose Dominion Virginia Power's plan for the W&OD bike trail

**Date:** Thu, 01 Jul 2004 12:43:01 -0400

**From:** John Breyault <john\_breyault@hotmail.com>

**To:** del\_Vanlandingham@House.state.va.us

**CC:** wodtrail@erols.com, savethetrail@direcway.com

Dear Ms. Van Landingham,

I am writing to urge you to oppose Dominion Virginia Power's plan to raze the entire western quarter of the scenic W&OD bike trail from Leesburg to Purcellville. If you were not aware, Dominion Virginia Power (DVP) is planning to erect at least 127 110-foot tall galvanized steel power transmission poles extending west from the east side of Leesburg to a location just to the east of Purcellville -- to be built next to the W&OD trail between Ivandale Road and Route 287.

According to statements from DVP, if this plan is approved each and every tree along the affected length of trail would most likely need to be cut down. This stretch of trail passes through incredibly beautiful rustic woodland. It's loss would be a great blow to the entire region. Additionally, the trail itself would be closed for the nine months or more required to complete the project, to the great detriment of the thousands of cyclists, joggers, horse riders, and others who regularly enjoy this regional treasure. Furthermore, the removal of such a large amount of vegetation would undoubtedly contribute to erosion and increased runoff which affects regional streams and creeks, including the Four Mile Run.

For more information on DVP's plan the impact it would have on the W&OD trail, I urge you to visit the following website:  
[http://www.wodfriends.org/Dominion\\_forest.html](http://www.wodfriends.org/Dominion_forest.html).

While this specific section of the trail does not lie within your district, a large number of your constituents, myself included, make frequent use of the trail and very much oppose any effort by DVP to destroy the scenic beauty of the path. As your constituent, I urge you to write to the Loudon County Board of Supervisors, Virginia State Corporation Commission, Delegate Joe May and Senator Bill Mims (33rd District) requesting that they oppose any DVP plan that would damage the W&OD trail.

Please feel free to contact me at your convenience if you have any questions or comments. I look forward to hearing your thoughts on this important issue.

Sincerely,

John D. Breyault  
2614G South Arlington Mill Drive  
Arlington, Virginia 22206  
Phone: (703) 824-1977  
E-mail: john\_breyault@hotmail.com

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Paul McCray, Manager  
W&OD Railroad Regional Park  
21293 Smiths Switch Road  
Ashburn, VA 20147  
Voice 703/729-0596  
Fax 703/724-0898  
Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority <http://www.nvrpa.org>  
W&OD Trail & Friends of the W&OD Information <http://www.wodfriends.org>  
W&OD Railroad History <http://www.geocities.com/pem20165>

Discover the Nature of a Regional Park!