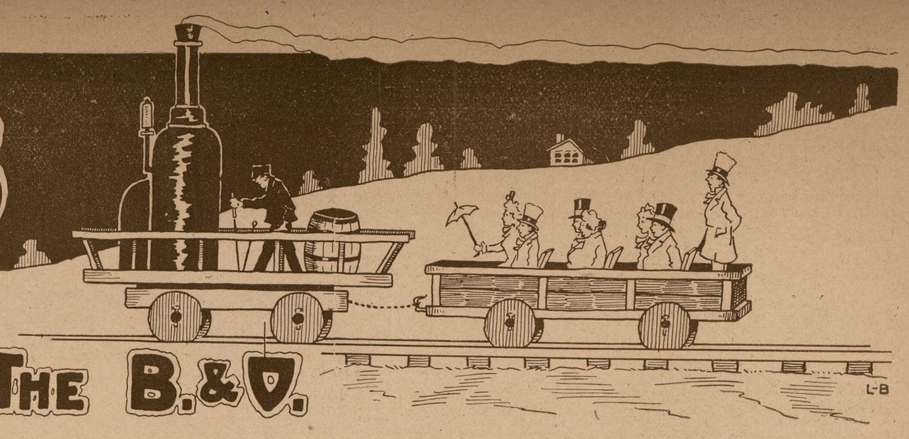
ON JULY 4TH. 1828

WORK WAS BEGUN LAYING TRACKS FOR FIRST STEAM RAILROAD NOW THE B.&O.



"IRON HORSE" MADE ITS INITIAL RUN OVER WOODEN RAILS THROUGH BALTIMORE COUNTY—

Something was about to happen at Ellicott's Mill.

Little Francis Ellicott heard of the coming event, for all the people were talking of nothing but the trial trip of the steam railroad—it was to run a distance of 13 miles from Baltimore city, through Baltimore county to Ellicott's Mill. If the trial trip proved successful the road would be extended on from the Patapsco Valley into the Potomac Valley or on to Point of Rocks and then wind its way over the mountains to the Ohio River.

Although it would be some time before the rails could be laid as far as the Ohio, the line was named the Baltimore and Ohio.

Francis was enthusiastic about it, as were all the people, but there were some who shook their heads, saying "it can't be done."

The old man who sat leisurely on the porch of the village store solemnly said: "The builders of this yer railroad expect one iron horse to do the work of ten on the turnpike. Even if the wheels of the contrapshun are to run on rails made fast to the ground, it's goiner be a failure."

Everyone was familiar with traveling by stage coach, by horseback and boat, but traveling by rail was something entirely new. To be sure, something of this sort had been tried up in Massachusetts, but proved a miserable failure.

When Francis heard this he sought the old man on the village store porch, his grandfather, and to him said: "What fun it will be to see the string of coaches with an iron horse pulling them over the rails."

Even the men who planned the road were a bit skeptical, but it was not long afterward, on July 4, 1828, that work was begun laying the tracks and in the spring of 1830 the road was all in readiness. A notice that the line would be opened to the public was posted, stating that the fare to Ellicott's Mill and return would be 75 cents.

On the morning of the iron horse's initial run a crowd assembled bright and early to witness the demonstration, and pretty soon the puffing brute, drawing a couple of coaches and filled, glided into their midst.

Francis never could tell just what his picture of a locomotive had been—something rather like a horse perhaps, but certainly nothing like that queer black machine about as large as a good sized chaise.

"What makes it go?" he inquired of his grand daddy.

"Steam!" was the old man's answer. He had watched the tea kettle on the stove with the steam puffing out, but never in his life had he witnessed anything like the iron horse. How could steam move that bulky, black object along the track? It was indeed strange, but it moved and at a rapid rate, drawing behind it with ease the coaches filled with officials of the road and their friends.

At the rate of 15 miles an hour the little train had come around the curve toward the mill, and at its greatest effort had attained a speed of 18 miles. Some folks were of the opinion that the speed could not be endured, that being whirled along at such a pace would mean disaster.

Peter Cooper, the inventor, was a happy man, as everyone congratulated him upon his success.

Francis looked at the iron horse first on one side and then on the other. Compared with the monster engnies of today it was but a mere toy, weighing about a ton. The little contrapshun was dubbed "Tom Thumb," and every youngster who saw it on the memorable day decided he would be an engineer and operate an iron horse like Peter Cooper's.

The next day a race was planned between the locomotive and a horse. At the Relay House while the engine was getting up steam the horse gained and was perhaps a quarter mile ahead when the excitement began.

The safety-valve began to scream and the locomotive began to gain. The pace was increased, passengers shouted, the engine passed the horse and a great hurrah went up from the onlookers who lined both sides of the track.

But just at this time, when the horse's driver was about giving up, the band which drove the pulley slipped from the drum of the locomotive—the safety-valve ceased to scream and the engine wheezed and panted. In vain Peter Cooper, who was at the throttle, lacerated his hands in attempting to replace it upon the wheels—in vain he tried to urge the fire with light wood; the horse gained and although the band was presently replaced the horse was too far ahead to be overtaken and came in a winner.

Nothwithstanding the fact that the horse reached the mill first, the victory really belonged to the locomotive. In less than 10 years the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad had 3000 miles of track.

Francis Ellicott, grown to manhood, visited the centennial in Philadelphia in 1876, and there saw a locomotive weighing 50 tons. He thought of the iron horse "Tom Thumb."

"The steam locomotive has about reached its limit," he said to himself, but in 1904 his son saw in St. Louis a freight engine which weighed 239 tons. He contrasted the monster with the picture his father had of the "Tom Thumb" of 1828 and then glanced at the new electric locomotive not far away and smilingly said: "The steam locomotive has not yet reached its limit."

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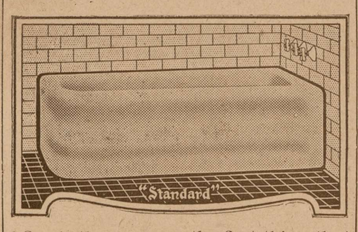

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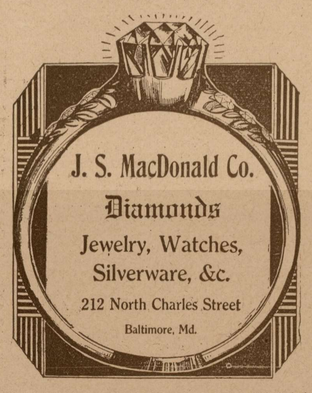

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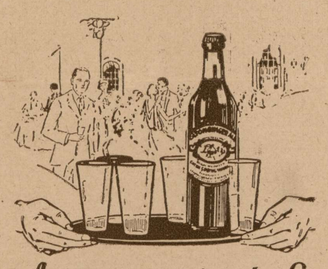

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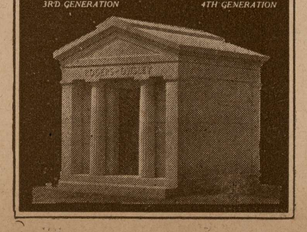

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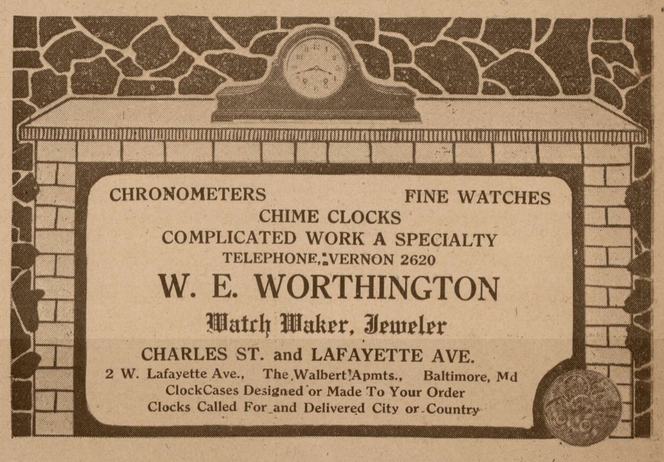

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