

Silent and empty, the vast Lackawanna Railroad trainshed in Buffalo lies abandoned in this early 1970's view from the U.S. Library of Congress collection. In its heyday, the DL&W's flagship *Lackawanna Limited* shared the terminal's platforms with connecting trains of the Nickel Plate Road to Chicago, and the luxurious *Pittsburgh Flyer* of the Buffalo, Rochester & Pittsburgh Railway.

With the motto of "Safety and Service," the BR&P Railway was well known among travelers for its fine accommodations and courteous train crews. While the bread and butter of the railroad was always its coal traffic, the general public knew the line for its immaculately maintained stations, comfortable equipment, and reliable passenger service. Residents of rural towns along the line set their watches to the arrival of the express or the morning local, which served as their connection to the outside world. Even when the company was absorbed by the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad in 1932, the spirit of the Buffalo, Rochester & Pittsburgh Railway continued to live on in its dedicated local employees.

For many railroaders, the actual "end of the line" for the BR&P came when passenger service was discontinued in the 1950's; for others, it was when the Baltimore & Ohio itself disappeared under the Chessie System banner in 1973, or when much of the north end of the line was abandoned in the 1990's. However, perhaps unknown to many railroad historians, the Buffalo, Rochester & Pittsburgh Railway actually continued to exist as a corporation until late last year. It was a filing by CSX Transportation with the Surface Transportation Board on November 21, 2013 that marked the official end of the BR&P. With the receipt of this formal notice, the 125-year old company was finally dissolved.

In existence under this name since 1887, the Buffalo Rochester & Pittsburgh Railway had its roots in the old Rochester & State Line Railroad. Formed on April 8, 1869 to tap the coal fields of northwestern Pennsylvania, the R&SL was completed from Rochester to Salamanca, NY in early 1878. At Salamanca, connections were made with the Atlantic & Great Western



This "Safety Slogan" pattern 7 1/2" bowl from BR&P dining car service is backmarked "Specialty China Servicers - Dubois, PA - Jackson China." Dave Hamilton collection.

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## End of the Line for the BR&P

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Railway, which in turn reached the growing network of lines extending into the coal and oil fields of the surrounding region. As with many small railroads of the period, the financial strain that came with the acquisition of property and equipment, along with the actual construction work on the line, resulted in bankruptcy. As a result, the company was reorganized as the Rochester & Pittsburgh Railroad on January 29, 1881.

The new railroad immediately set out to strengthen its competitive position, by extending its route directly into the heart of Pennsylvania coal country. By early 1883, the mainline had arrived in Punxsutawney, and a branch to Buffalo was nearing completion. Operating rights over the Allegheny Valley Railroad into Pittsburgh were secured, and through passenger trains began operating in June of 1883. Coal trains soon began to roll between mines owned by the Rochester & Pittsburgh Coal & Iron Company and Great Lakes transfer facilities in both Buffalo and Rochester. As a north-south railroad, the R&P crossed most of the lines that extended across New York State, providing a fair amount of interchange traffic destined to local customers along its route.

However, despite its rapidly growing business, the Rochester & Pittsburgh Railroad had drained its financial resources during this period of expansion, and entered foreclosure proceedings in May of 1885. One major stockholder in the R&P who did not want to lose his investment was Adrian Iselin of New York City. Iselin purchased the bankrupt railroad on October 16, 1885, through two companies: the Pittsburgh & State



*C.T. Ham bell bottom lantern, marked "BR&P Ry" and "Engine" on the lid, and "Engine" on the base, with clear cast "BR&P RR" globe, also cast with an "E" for use in engine lanterns only. Collection of Dave Hamilton.*

Form 101 Buffalo, Rochester & Pittsburgh Railway Co. Form 101

31 TRAIN ORDER NO. 31

TO CLE No 30 and 32. AT DLW Jct. No. 21 has right over No. 30 and No. 32 Let lay to DLW Jct. No. 30 and No. 32 get this order at DLW Jct. M.G.M.

CONDUCTOR AND ENGINEER MUST EACH HAVE A COPY OF THIS ORDER.

Repeated at 348 a.m.

CONDUCTOR TRAIN MADE TIME OPERATOR

Reiff - No. 30 Complete 35A Eberman

*A Buffalo Rochester & Pittsburgh Railway Form #31 train order, which required the train crew to sign for receipt, delivered in October, 1924 to a train at DL&W Junction, south of Rochester, NY. Collection of Dave Hamilton.*

Line Railroad in Pennsylvania, and the Buffalo, Rochester & Pittsburgh Railroad in New York. Operating under the BR&P name, the two companies were formally consolidated as the Buffalo, Rochester & Pittsburgh Railway on March 11, 1887.

The next two decades saw continued expansion of the BR&P, with the extension of its own route toward Pittsburgh, new coal and ore docks constructed in its northern terminals, and a car ferry service instituted across Lake Ontario. Improved passenger stations were built and new equipment purchased, giving the railroad its reputation for "safety and service" among travelers. Coal fields were developed throughout northwestern Pennsylvania, and additional branches were laid to facilitate the constant flow of "black diamonds."

The years following World War I brought many changes to the railroads of the northeast. Heavy wartime traffic during the years of government control had worn down the infrastructure, and most lines were struggling to recover. The coal market was becoming more competitive, with new mines opening in the southern states, reducing the profitability of this important traffic base for the BR&P and its coal-hauling neighbors. The 1920's were also a period of corporate turmoil for many railroads, with investors hoping to profit from battles between large companies over the control of smaller ones. In 1928, the majority of BR&P stock was acquired by the Van Sweringen brothers, owners of the C&O and the Nickel Plate Road.

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Following the stock market crash of 1929, many investors scrambled to divest their interest in speculative securities, while the Interstate Commerce Commission developed a plan for the consolidation of railroads into several major systems. These actions led to additional changes in the ownership of various lines, with companies making joint arrangements with connecting railroads or attempting to purchase them outright. It was during this period that the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad became interested in the BR&P.

On January 1, 1932, the B&O acquired majority stock ownership of the Buffalo, Rochester & Pittsburgh Railway, and took over operation of the line. The BR&P name disappeared almost immediately, with the B&O logo taking its place on timetables, equipment, and dining car china. Initially, the BR&P was intended to be part of an alternative mainline route for the B&O from Pittsburgh to New York, via the



Reading at Williamsport, PA and the Central Railroad of New Jersey (which were already part of the B&O "Royal Blue" route). However, this plan never materialized, and train operations on the BR&P continued largely as they had prior to the B&O takeover.

As part of the Interstate Commerce Commission's approval for the purchase of the BR&P from the Van Sweringen brothers (which amounted to slightly under 85% of the outstanding shares), the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad was also required to acquire all additional BR&P stock that remained privately held. At the time of the transaction, the B&O had made an offer to purchase BR&P stock at \$100 per share, which resulted in the railroad obtaining 99.96% of both the common and preferred stock. A few shares remained unaccounted for, which meant that the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad essentially owned the BR&P, with a handful of minority "silent partners."

A surge in traffic on the line came during World War II, as heavy industries on each leg of the "Y" that made up the map of the former BR&P worked around the clock to supply the war effort. Coal and ore drags pulled by mallets rushed across the railroad enroute to steel mills and coke ovens, while passenger trains were filled to capacity with wartime travelers. However, although this almost unlimited business helped the railroad industry recover from the depression, increased competition from other modes of transportation was just around the corner.

During the 1950's, long-distance travelers discovered the speed of airlines, while highway construction projects made travel by auto more practical for residents of the rural communities that were served by the former BR&P. Passenger service on the line ended in 1955, and local freight traffic on the north end began to dwindle. The route's core business of coal kept trains on the BR&P running, though, along with overhead freight to Buffalo and Rochester.

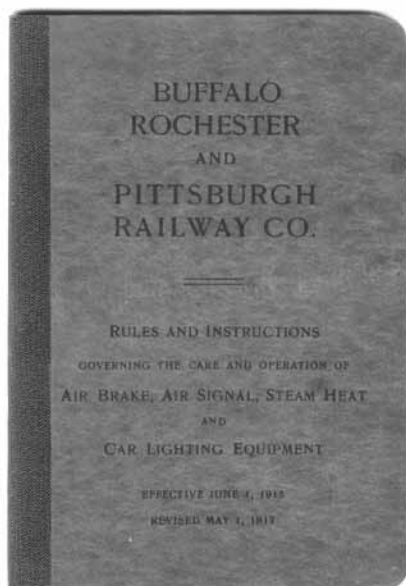
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The 1960's brought a period of mergers and consolidations to the transportation industry, and in 1961 the Chesapeake & Ohio Railroad gained ownership of the B&O. In 1973, the two railroads, along with the affiliated Western Maryland, received a new image under the "Chessie System" banner, and locomotives with the company's yellow and orange paint scheme began to appear on trains that ran over the old BR&P.

In 1987, Chessie System was merged into CSX Transportation, which began to spin off its unprofitable, light-density lines. The Rochester Branch went first, sold to Genesee & Wyoming subsidiary Rochester & Southern RR by the end of the year. The rest of the BR&P followed, to the Buffalo & Pittsburgh Railroad (also owned by the G&W) in 1988. The old Buffalo, Rochester & Pittsburgh had effectively been recreated, as a modern regional railroad line.

Over the next decade, trackage on the north end of the line was trimmed back, with a large portion of the Rochester side abandoned in 1991, and trains to Buffalo shifting to trackage rights on the former Pennsylvania Railroad north of Machias Junction in late 1997.



One thing that had not been included in the sale to the G&W was the BR&P name itself. Throughout the many mergers that had taken place over the years, the Buffalo, Rochester & Pittsburgh Railway continued to exist as a corporation, with the Baltimore & Ohio and its successors owning the majority of its stock. Even when the corporate identity of the B&O



*East Salamanca, NY was the hub of the northern end of the Buffalo, Rochester & Pittsburgh Railway, near where the mainline split into branches to Buffalo and Rochester. In this postcard view, southbound trains from each line meet to transfer passengers bound for Pittsburgh. Collection of David Hamilton.*

was absorbed by CSX in 1987, and that pioneer railroad name ceased to exist, ownership of the BR&P simply passed to CSX Transportation.

The reason that the BR&P continued to cling to life on paper was the fact that there were still shareholders with a minority interest in the company. By 2013, there was in fact only one BR&P stockholder in addition to CSX, whose holdings amounted to just one share of common stock. Walston Hill Brown had been an investor in the BR&P, but had died in 1928, before he could cash in on the Baltimore & Ohio's 1932 tender offer of \$100 per share. During the following years, all other outstanding stock was acquired by the B&O, leaving Brown's estate as the only minority owner.

After over two decades of maintaining the Buffalo, Rochester & Pittsburgh as a corporation, with its regulatory reporting requirements and related administrative costs, CSX Transportation finally decided to take action in an effort to relieve itself of this burden.

Under the Abandoned & Unclaimed Property Act in the state of Pennsylvania (where the BR&P had been incorporated), CSX was permitted to make payment to the state's Bureau of Unclaimed Property, in lieu of actually purchasing the one share of BR&P stock that had been owned by Walston Hill Brown. After an exhaustive

search for the heirs or beneficiaries of the Brown estate, CSX determined that none could be located, and arranged for the State of Pennsylvania to receive payment for the outstanding share of BR&P stock.

As of May 7, 2013, one share of stock in the Buffalo, Rochester & Pittsburgh Railway was valued at \$874. Considering that CSX had sold most of the company's assets to the Genesee & Wyoming, this seems to have been a fairly good price! With payment of this sum to the Bureau of Unclaimed Property, CSX Transportation became the sole owner of the BR&P, and could absorb the company.

On October 16, 2013, the directors of CSX Transportation approved the merger agreement where the Buffalo, Rochester & Pittsburgh Railway would be absorbed into CSX. The directors of the BR&P approved the same agreement on the 28th of the month, and it was filed with the Surface Transportation Board on November 21, 2013. With no objections from the STB, the merger was authorized to take place on December 21, 2013.

With the approval of the merger, the final chapter in the 125-year history of the Buffalo, Rochester & Pittsburgh Railway Company finally came to a close. While the trains of the Buffalo & Pittsburgh RR continue to roll over the former BR&P, the end of the line has come at last for the route of "Safety & Service."