

# THE BALTIMORE & OHIO RAILROAD INCORPORATED 1827

## THE FIRST COMMERCIAL RAILROAD IN THE UNITED STATES

The first thirteen miles of the B&O Railroad ran from Baltimore's Mount Clare Station through the Patapsco River Valley to Ellicott's Mills. Halfway, passengers stopped for lunch at Relay while a fresh horse was hitched to the box-shaped closed car.

The routes chosen for railroads often followed the course of rivers, providing a scenic and delightful view for passengers. However, scenery had nothing to do with the choice of routes. River valleys cut through mountains and provided railroads easy grades that were close to sea level. The more level the railroad grade, the lower fuel consumption and the faster the trip, which helped the railroad to show a higher profit.



The box-shaped horse-drawn rail car at Relay.

In the summer of 1830, the Tom Thumb, most famous of the early locomotives, was on a trial run when it was challenged to a race by a horse-drawn passenger car. The Tom Thumb held the lead until the band which drove the pulley that drove the blower snapped from the drum, causing the steam engine to lose power and the horse won the race. Soon afterwards, the steam engine was improved. By summer of 1831, the Iron Horse was pulling the train to Ellicott's Mills on a regular schedule, and the horse went out to pasture.

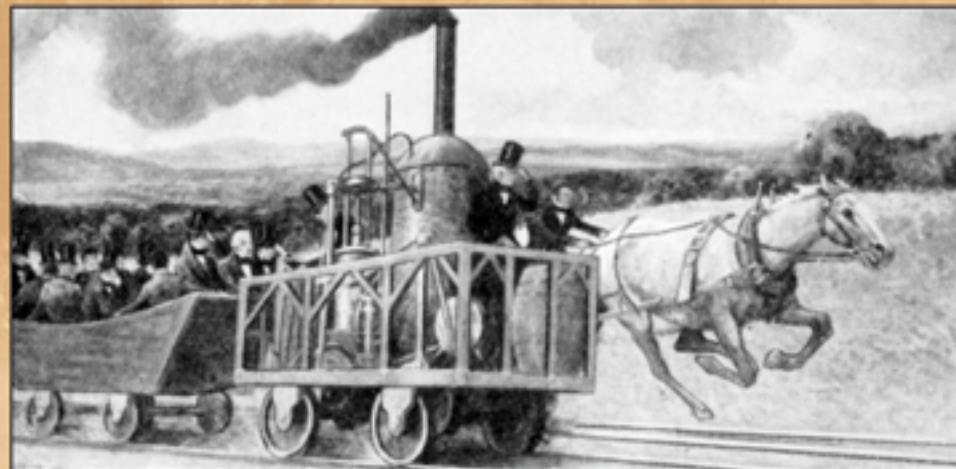


On July 4, 1828, Charles Carroll of Carrollton, the last surviving signer of the Declaration of Independence, dug the first spade of dirt to start construction of the B&O railroad.

The Thomas Viaduct, a multiple-arch stone bridge, curves across the Patapsco River in a graceful four degree arc. Started on July 4, 1832, it was dedicated July 4, 1835. It cost \$142,236. Nicknamed "Latrobe's Folly," it was expected to dramatically collapse in a cloud of dust as the first train rolled across. Architect Benjamin H. Latrobe planned for the 612 foot, eight-arched bridge to stand through time like the pyramids of Egypt. Latrobe was right and the skeptics were wrong. Today, in testimony to his genius, all the interlocked granite blocks remain in place. The Thomas Viaduct, a survivor of disastrous floods, stands majestically today as a National Historic Landmark and the icon of the Patapsco River Valley.



The B&O's Royal Blue on time en route to Baltimore.



Peter Cooper, builder of the Tom Thumb locomotive, watches as the horse-drawn car wins the race.