

A Guide to the Washington and Old Dominion Railway Right-of-Way Map , 1916

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1916

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History

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Title Statement

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Descriptive Summary

Collection number

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English

Collector

Lewis Leigh, Leesburg, VA

Physical Characteristics

Oversized blueprint map, 30 pages.

Repository

Thomas Balch Library

Administrative Information

Access Restrictions

Collection open for research.

Use Restrictions

Physical characteristics and conditions affect use of this material.

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Adjunct Descriptive Data

Bibliography

Friends of the W&OD. www.wodfriends.his.com/trail.html (accessed on 13 February, 2015) Harrison, Noel. "Advent of the WA&FC: Northern Fairfax County's First Electric Railway." *Northern Virginia Heritage: A Journal of Local History*, Vol. VI, No. 1 (February 1984). Harwood, Herbert H. Jr. *Rails to the Blue Ridge: The Washington and Old Dominion Railroad, 1847-1968*. Fairfax Station, VA: Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority, 2000. *Railroad Valuation Maps, ca. 1915 - ca. 1920*. Record Group 134: Records of the Interstate Commerce Commission, 1887 - 1995, National Archives and Records Administration OPA Catalog, www.research.archives.gov/description/562366. (Accessed on 16 February, 2015). *Southern Railway Right-of-Way Map, ca. 1910 (OMB 018)* Thomas Balch Library, Leesburg, VA *W&OD Railroad Maps*, www.nvrpa.org/park/w_od_railroad/content/wod_railroad_maps (accessed on 16 February, 2015). *Washington and Old Dominion Railway. Resorts: From the Capitol to the Blue Ridge on the Washington & Old Dominion, 1916*. Williams, Ames W. *Washington & Old Dominion Railroad, 1847-1968*. Arlington, VA: Arlington Historical Society, Inc., 1989.

Biographical Information

In 1903, John R. McLean (1848-1916) and Senator Stephen B. Elkins (1841-1911) with a number of investors began construction of the Great Falls and Old Dominion Railroad. An electric trolley car line, the Great Falls and Old Dominion Railroad carried inter-urban traffic between Washington DC and new suburban communities. Specifically, McLean and Elkins hoped DC Residents would take the Great Falls and Old Dominion Railroad (GF&OD) to the newly constructed park at Great Falls - a "trolley park" ideal for outings by urban day-trippers. New communities sprang up along the trolley line, and eventually both McLean and Elkins lent their names to suburbs. In 1911 McLean brokered a contract to combine the GF&OD with the Southern Railway, part of the extensive holdings of J.P. Morgan's conglomerate. A new company, the Washington & Old Dominion Railroad, was incorporated to oversee the combined rail lines, which would now run between terminus stations at Georgetown and Bluemont Junction. Elkin's death shortly after the deal was made complicated the organization of the new company. A stipulation in Elkin's will required that his GF&OD stock not be sold; therefor the GF&OD became the controlling interest of the new suburban line. A three mile connector between the GF&OD line was completed in July 1912 and electrification of the existing Bluemont line was finished by December of the same year. Six electric passenger trains a day operated on the line. The line carried 1,405,102 passengers in the first eight months of operations alone. Freight traffic was also steady although freight continued to be hauled by steam locomotives until after World War I. Despite heavy use, however, the W&OD lost money in its first year of business.

Attempts to increase profits included cost saving measures such as constructing "homemade" locomotives in the W&OD Rosslyn machine shop from recycled parts and retrofitting used cars from other railways to add needed passenger cars. Staffing and construction costs, along with the annual rental fees paid to the Southern Railway for the Bluemont line, \$45,000 in 1912, nevertheless led to financial difficulties for the W&OD. Advertising efforts were made to encourage excursion traffic on the line, including publication of an illustrated booklet entitled *Resorts: From the Capitol to the Blue Ridge on the Washington & Old Dominion*. Published in 1916 and illustrated with photographs and other illustrations of natural beauty and pastoral pastimes, the booklet touts cooling breezes and affordable, comfortable lodging with the goal of luring city dwellers out into the countryside.

Financial problems persisted for the W&OD. John R. McLean's death on June 9, 1916 left the company in the hands of the heirs of the original backers, who, seeing little profit from the W&OD were disinterested owners. For the next two decades the railroad operated under what the Virginia Corporate Commission termed as "absentee ownership". The lack of investment in the improvements in the line along with labor disputes and strikes led to service disruptions and complaints from passengers and freight customers alike. In 1919, passenger traffic began to decline as automobiles offered an alternative form of transportation. Freight traffic on the line steadily grew throughout the 1920's, however, financial problems continued and increased with the onset of the Great Depression, and the W&OD declared bankruptcy in 1932. New owners and management revived the railroad during the 1940's and 1950s. Freight continued to be the best source of income for the line. Passenger service was limited and ended entirely in 1951. The opening of Dulles National Airport in 1955 led to an increase in freight traffic. Competition from the expanding interstate and highway systems took its toll on this source of income by the late 1960s, and the W&OD went out of business in 1968. At that time, all W&OD property and right of ways were purchased by Virginia Electric and Power Company (VEPCO) and the Virginia Highways Department. Soon after, the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority (NVRPA) launched a successful campaign to use the right of way for a recreational trail. In 1977

NVRPA began paving the former rail bed. The trail continues to be maintained as the Washington and Old Dominion Railroad Regional Park.

Scope and Content

This collection consists of a blueprint right of way track map of the Washington & Old Dominion Railroad (W&OD) dated 1 July 1916. The map is 26 pages; 118 cm x 62 cm. Rolled maps have been flattened. Depicted are the Great Falls division (1 page, 2 copies), Spout Run Section (2 maps 2 copies each) and Bluemont division (24 pages) of the W&OD. Mileage and station numbers are indicated on each map to identify the portion of the right of way depicted. Each map shows properties along the right of way, including those owned by the railroad as well as those owned by private individuals and businesses. Details about trackside buildings owned by the railway are included, noting stations, depots, signals, bridges, roads, and grade measurements. Names, dates and deed book citations for properties are also noted on each map.

These maps were produced shortly after the death of W&OD owner John R. McLean in 1916. Copies of these right of way maps were submitted to the Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC) as directed by the Valuation Act of 1913. ICC valuation maps were prepared by railroads and forwarded to the ICC, where they were reviewed, filed, and annotated as needed. The maps were used to value railroad property and establish fixed rates that would yield a reasonable profit for the railroad. Copies of these maps submitted to the ICC are now part of Record Group 134: Records of the Interstate Commerce Commission, 1887 - 1995, National Archives and Records Administration.

Contents List

OMB 023

Box 1

Folder 1: Great Falls Division map [no mileage marked](Station 0+00 to station 94 + 02.4) [2]

Folder 2: Spout Run Section maps mile 0 to 3(Station 0+00 to 158+40) [2]

Folder 3: Bluemont Division maps mile 00 to 8 (Station 0+00 to 422+48.8)

Folder 4: Bluemont Division maps mile 8 to 16 (Station 422+48.8 to 844+84.6)

Box 2

Folder 5: Bluemont Division maps mile 16 to 24 (Station 844+84.6 to 1267+11.7)

Folder 6: Bluemont Division maps mile 24 to 32 (Station 1161+57 to 1689+55.01)

Folder 7: Bluemont Division maps mile 32 to 40 (Station 1689+55.01 to 2111+97.7)

Folder 8: Bluemont Division maps mile 40 to 48 (Station 2111+97.7 to 2534+23.5)