



Identifying the Twisted Wreckage of a Boxcar on the Georgetown Branch of the B&O

by Ben Sullivan - ben.sullivan75@gmail.com - 9/2021

Cast to the side of the right of way, just North of Dalecarlia Tunnel on the Georgetown Branch of the B&O are the remains of a very old boxcar. The car bears scars of damage, showing mangled steel parts, and was cut into three distinct sections with a cutting torch; a center section and two ends. The ends sit upright, buried in decades of leaves and fallen branches, while the center section lays upside-down near the right of way. I believe that the center section was actually dragged out of the woods in recent years and set in place during a local community cleanup (*What a find!*).

The actual history of what this car was and how it ended up in such a place is elusive. I am going to present some additional evidence that I believe draws us closer to the possibility of the car being one of the cars seen in a photo from 1942 showing some cars caught in major flooding at Fletcher's Boathouse in Washington, DC along the C&O Canal. The likelihood that this car was the one in the photo is much more viable having spent some time studying the wreckage photos more closely.



Fletcher's
Boathouse,
10/17/1942
Collection of
Robert Truax, W.
Duvall, scanned
by myself

The boxcar in
question (**red arrow**)
is just barely visible
(the roof) beyond the
breach of the canal
towpath.

In this photo, you can
see where the C&O
Canal was breached and
water is rushing
down to the Potomac
River, past Fletcher's
Boathouse (**blue
arrow**) below.



Fletcher's
Boathouse,
10/17/1942
Collection of
Robert Truax, W.
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by myself

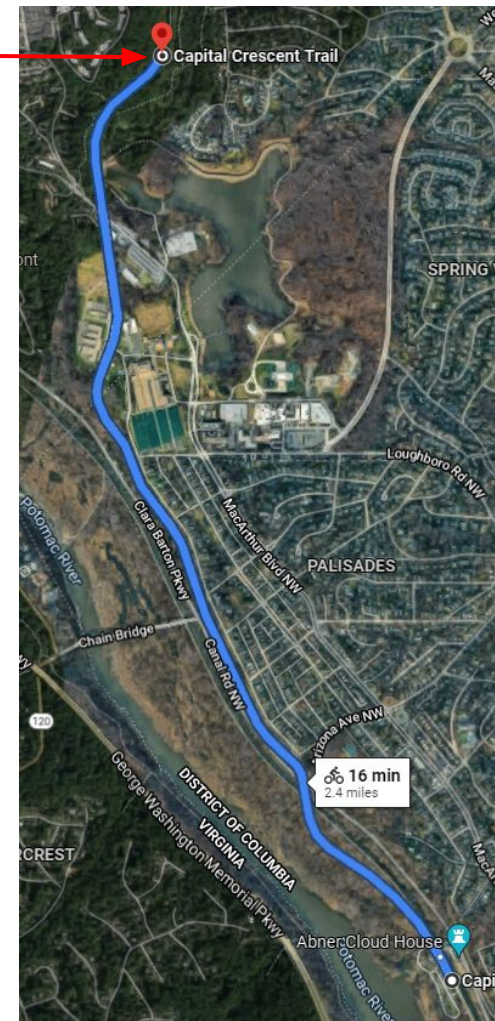
The boxcar in
question is
submerged in the
rushing
floodwaters.

The wreckage is about a 2.5 miles away from the site of the flood

<https://goo.gl/maps/UuzcWWEMzwE9YthU8>



Note the center section of the boxcar is to the west side and the two end sections are off in the woods to the East side.



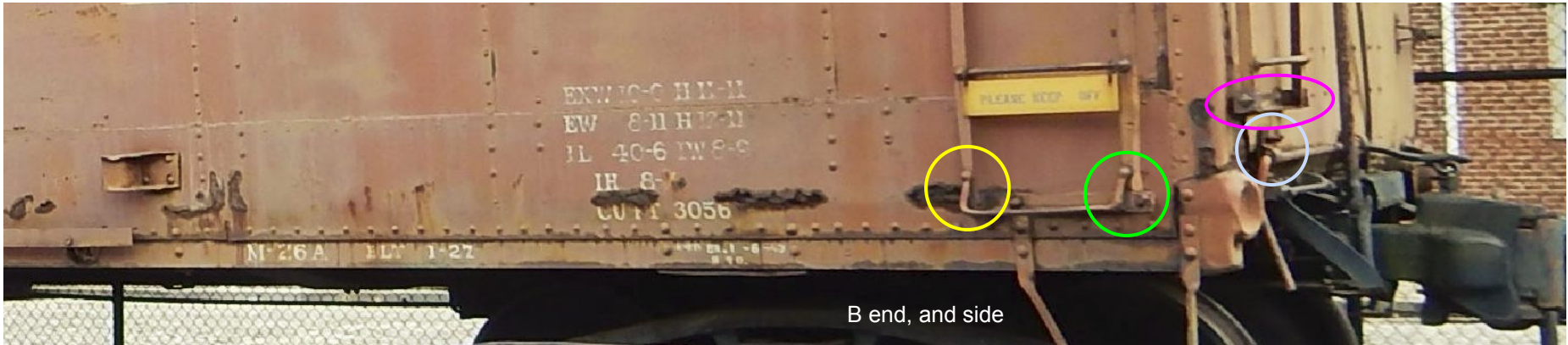
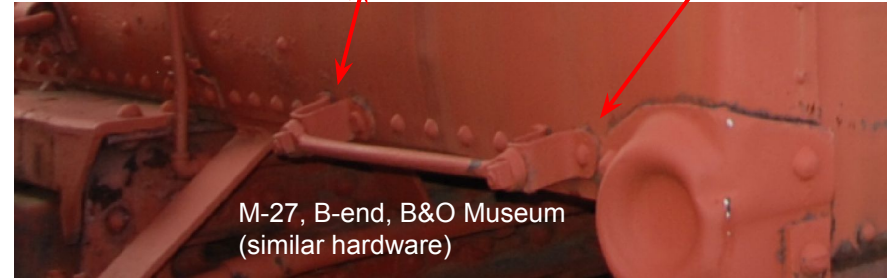
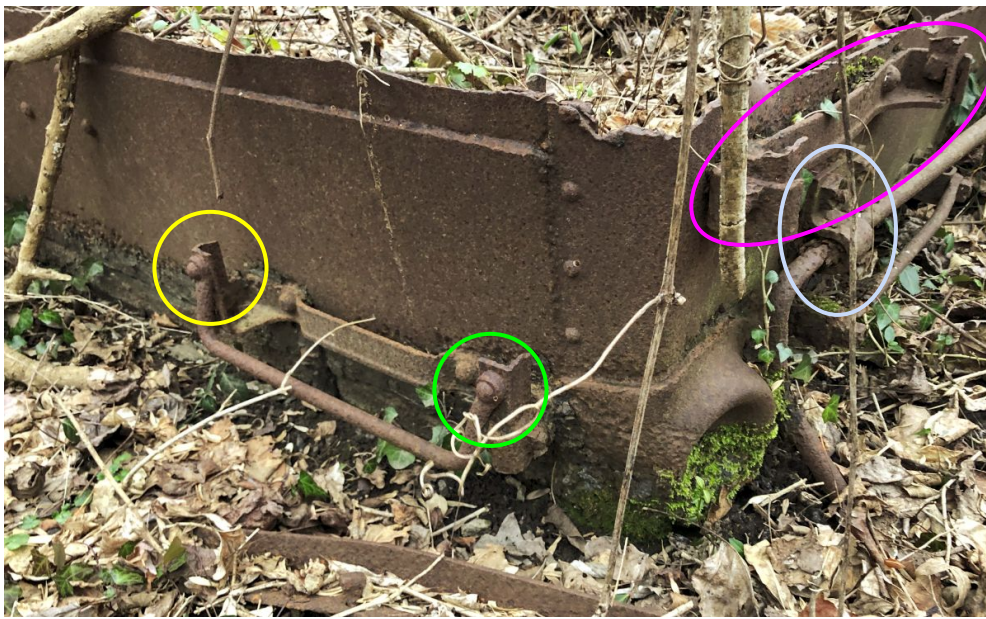
Location of wreckage

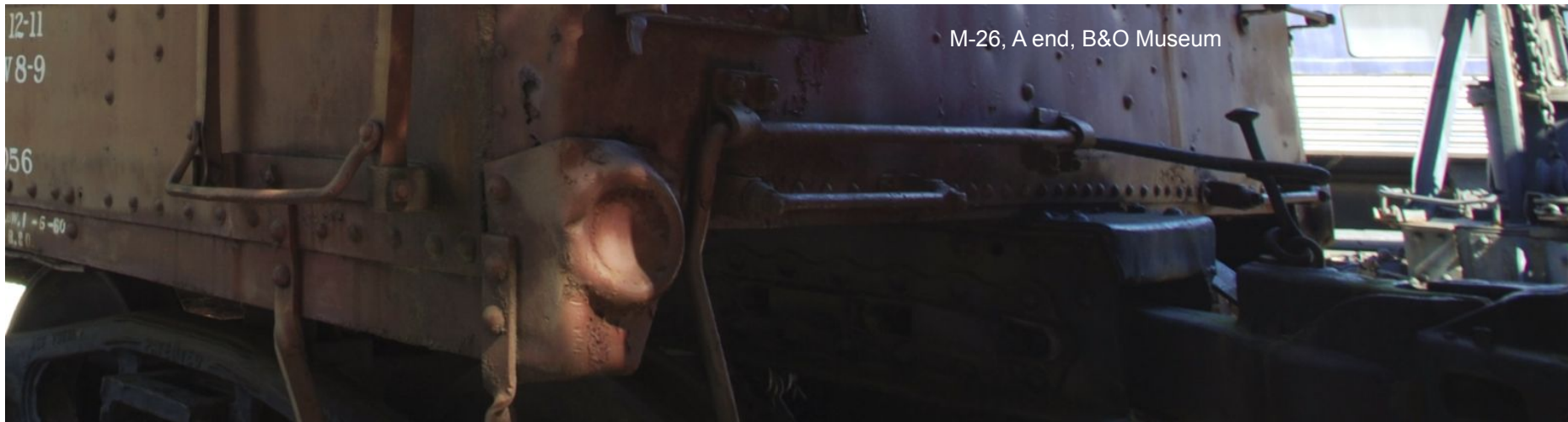


Background, Comparison Photos and Info

On Jan 12, 2019 my friend Kelly and I visited the site of the wrecked boxcar. I closely studied the photos I shot and managed to narrow down the car to a likely candidate. I believe this is a B&O M-26D or E class boxcar. This aligns well with the car seen in the flood photos above. There are very distinctive elements of the car that lead me to believe that this is an M-26D or E class boxcar, built between 1928-1930. The underbody detail reveals an unusual Duryea style underframe narrowing it to the D/E subclass. I gathered info from various online sources, as I don't have any definitive M-26 books or articles on hand. *(I'm still looking for a Railway Prototype Cyclopedia, Vol. 18 at a reasonable price!)* Anyway, let me show you what I found.







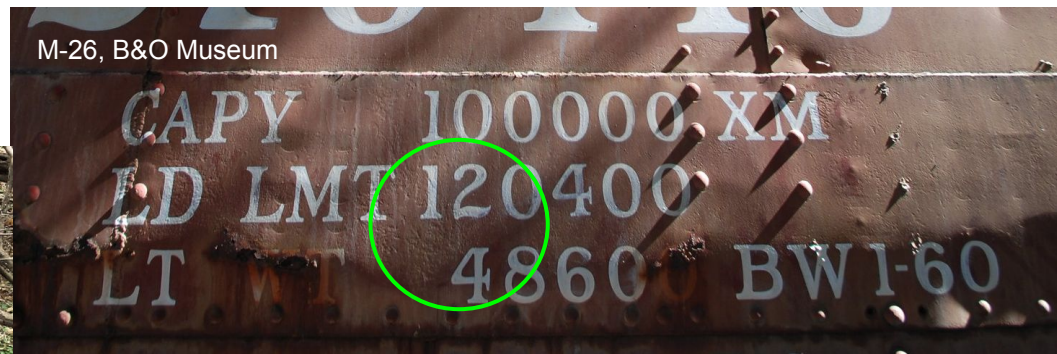
M-26, A end, B&O Museum



Rivet pattern



M-26, B&O Museum



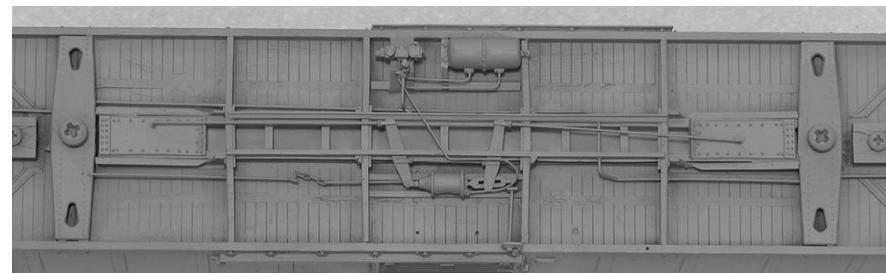
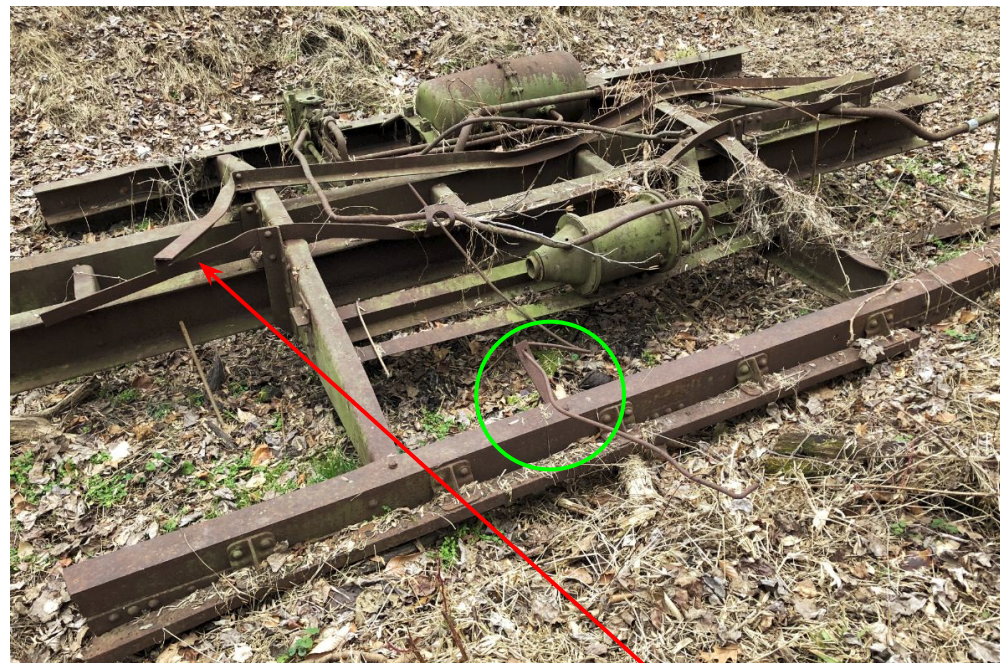
Actual paint remains on the boxcar. This is the only paint I could find still remaining on the car.



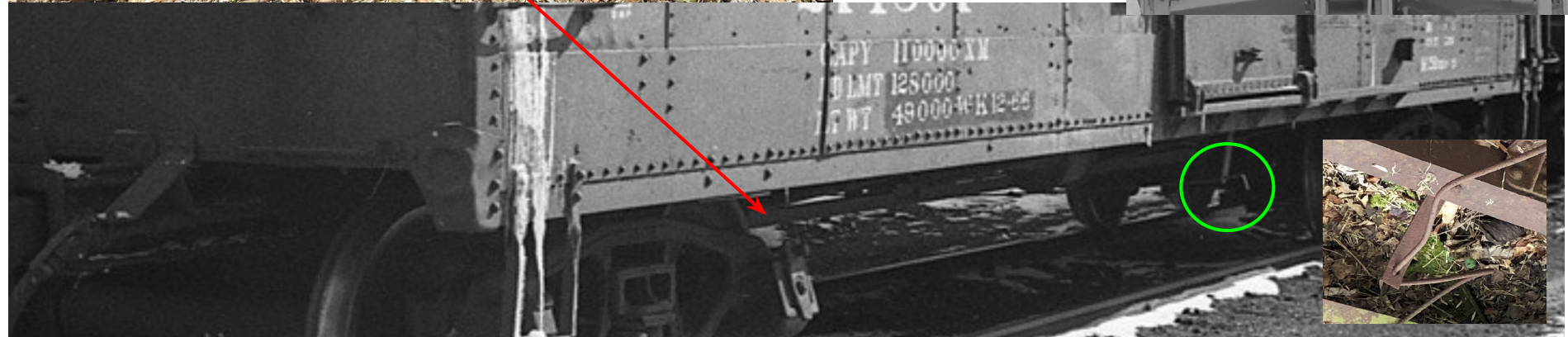
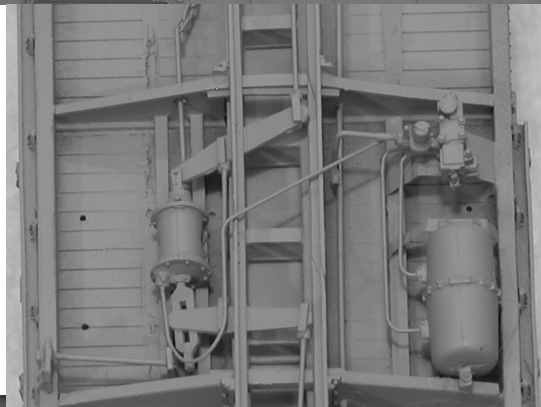
On the prototype, the placement of the "LD LMT" stencil varied - sometimes it was in the middle of the plate and other times near the top, seen here. To me, this resembles the "12" of "120400."

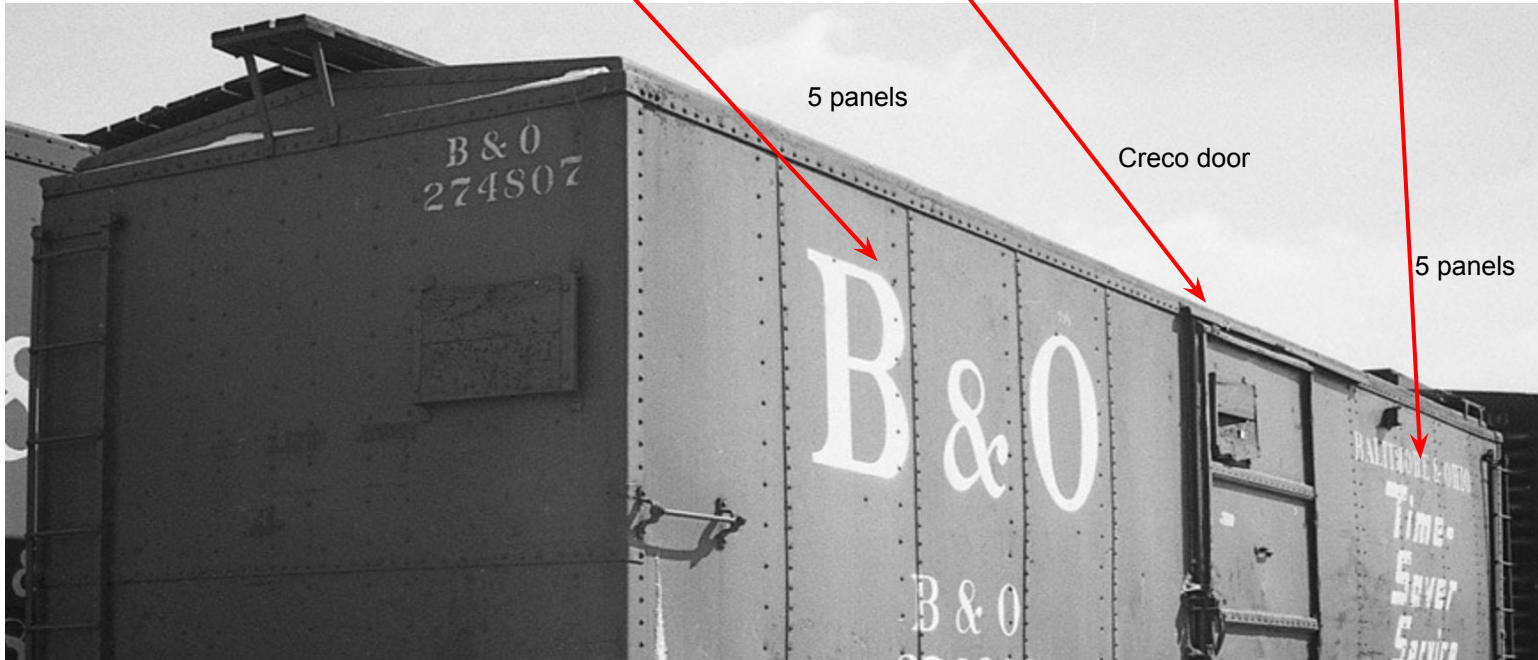
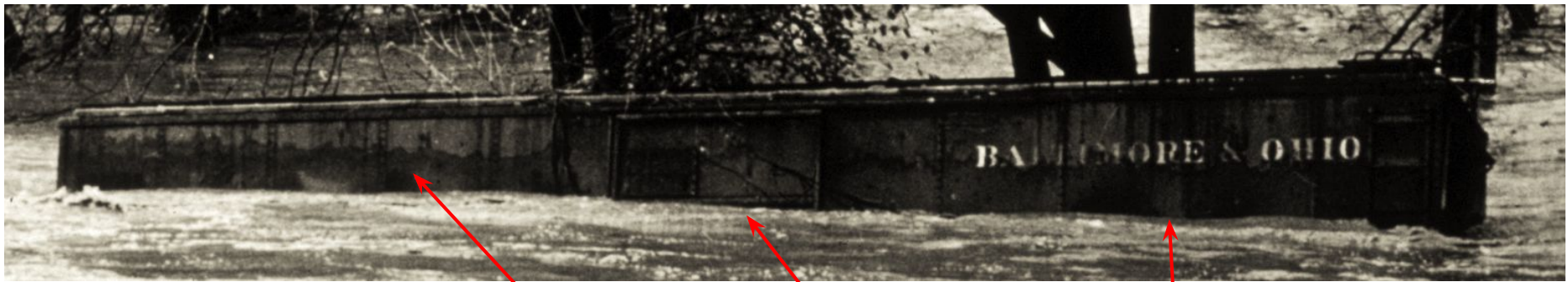


M-26, B&O Museum



[Speedwich Media](#)
makes an HO scale
resin mini kit for the
Duryea Underframe that
was common on B&O
M-26 D/E variants. In
the photos to the right,
we can see the same
underframe layout.





Based on the evidence, I believe this is likely a B&O class M-26D or E and it's very plausible it is the car seen here in the flooding at Fletcher's Boathouse. Best guess is the railroad dragged it out of the muck, loaded it on a flatcar and brought it up to dry ground where they cut it up, salvaged some of the sheet metal and left the rest behind.



From [Protocraft](#) site

[Protocraft produces a decal set for these cars with a nice historic breakdown:](#)

Between 1925 and March of 1931, the B&O took delivery of 14,000 1923 ARA design all steel boxcars as follows:

Series 265000-266999, 2000 cars, Pullman Car & Manufacturing Co, Lot 5387, delivered May 1925, Class M-26
Series 267000-267999, 1000 cars, Bethlehem Steel Car Co, Lot 2435, delivered February 1926, Class M-26B
Series 268000-268999, 1000 cars, Standard Steel Car Co, delivered 1925-26, Class M-26A
Series 269000-269999, 1000 cars, Bethlehem Steel Car Co, Lot 2680, delivered August 1926, Class M-26A
Series 270000-270499, 500 cars, Standard Steel Car Co, delivered December 1926, Class M-26A
Series 270500-270999, 500 cars, American Car & Foundry, Lot 424, delivered 1927, Class M-26A
Series 271000-271499, 500 cars, Pressed Steel Car Company, delivered 1927, Class M-26A
Series 271500-272499, 1000 cars, Baltimore Car & Foundry, delivered May-July 1928, Class M-26C
Series 272500-273499, 1000 cars, Baltimore Car & Foundry, delivered September-October 1928, Class M-26D Duryea u/f
Series 273500-273749, 250 cars, Baltimore Car & Foundry, delivered February-March 1929, Class M-26D Duryea u/f
Series 273750-274499, 750 cars, Baltimore Car & Foundry, delivered January-March 1929, Class M-26D Duryea u/f
Series 274500-276499, 2000 cars, Baltimore Car & Foundry, delivered Aug 1929/Jan 1930, Class M-26D Duryea u/f
Series 276500-277999, 1500 cars, Baltimore Car & Foundry, delivered January-March 1930, Class M-26D Duryea u/f
Series 278000-278999, 1000 cars, Baltimore Car & Foundry, delivered March 1931, Class M-26E Duryea u/f

Note: Between 1931 and 1950, 29 cars were rebuilt and moved into the 284000-28999 Series.

Paint & Lettering: Cars were painted B&O 43-H-1 Freight Car Brown. In the 1950's they were repainted F-60 Freight Car Red - a bright oxide red unique to the B&O and very similar to the WM. Lettering was all white stencil paste. Decal sheet contains 2" reporting marks for truck bolsters. Almost all identical but with minor variations, there were some 50,000 of this design built during this period, with the PRR having 28,925 of their X29 version alone. To fully understand these cars and the various roads that used them the modeler should refer to Ed Hawkins and Pat Wlder's very comprehensive RP CYC series, Vol 18, pages 61-79, with charts on pages 112-113.

Model: PSC #15469 *Lettering set designed and created at Protocraft Decals based on artwork of Ted Culotta*

Final Thoughts

My confidence level is relatively high that it's an M-26D/E class car based on my findings. I would LOVE to hear from others on what they think. And, if they are up for a bit of exploration, I'd be happy to show folks where the wreckage is. Personally, I'd like to revisit the location and take some more photos and measurements. My interest in prototype freight cars has skyrocketed over the last two years and as such this whole legend has really piqued my curiosity.

I would still like to know definitively how the car ended up there and why it was scrapped in place. If it indeed is from the 1942 flood, America had been at war for nearly a year. Scrap metal was at a premium. Why was this left behind? I could imagine that the car frame was bent and mangled enough to make it not worth saving as a freight car, but what about the scrap metal? It seems to me that many of the smaller parts, like knobs and valves were either poached from the frame by the railroad or gathered by locals as souvenirs.

The M-26D/E cars were built between 1928-30. The wrecked car bears signs of having been rebuilt, as it has the patch panels along the side sills. When were the B&O cars patched? Was it done on an as-needed basis along the life of the M-26 cars or was there a program to patch them in groups? Knowing these details could further refine the class/origin of this mystery car.

In any event, it's a fun legend to mull over. I welcome any input you may have!

Ben
ben.sullivan75@gmail.com

Additional links/info

http://gallery.sluggyjunx.com/railroad_and_industrial/georgetownbranch/gb_prototype_photos/Jan-12-2019-Georgetown-Branch-Exploration?page=19

<http://www.rrpicturearchives.net/rsPicture.aspx?id=304671>

<http://www.rrpicturearchives.net/rsPicture.aspx?id=242486>

<http://www.rrpicturearchives.net/rsPicture.aspx?id=51519>

<http://www.rrpicturearchives.net/rsPicture.aspx?id=994645>

<http://rr-fallenflags.org/bo/bo269797d19.jpg>

<http://rr-fallenflags.org/bo/bo270163gga.jpg>

<http://rr-fallenflags.org/bo/bo272338jpa.jpg>

<http://rr-fallenflags.org/bo/bo274539amm.jpg>

<http://rr-fallenflags.org/bo/bo276933f13.jpg>

<http://rr-fallenflags.org/bo/bo277322goa.jpg>

<http://rr-fallenflags.org/bo/bo278971amm.jpg>

<https://www.intermountain-railway.com/distrib/redcaboose/html/RR-37080.htm>

<https://borhs.org/modelermag/modeler-50-201912.pdf>

<http://steamerafreightcars.com/prototype/frtcars/protoduryeamain.html>

M-26D Car Diagram (B&ORR Historical Society)

