

Washington's Early Railroad Stations

By John Clagett Proctor.

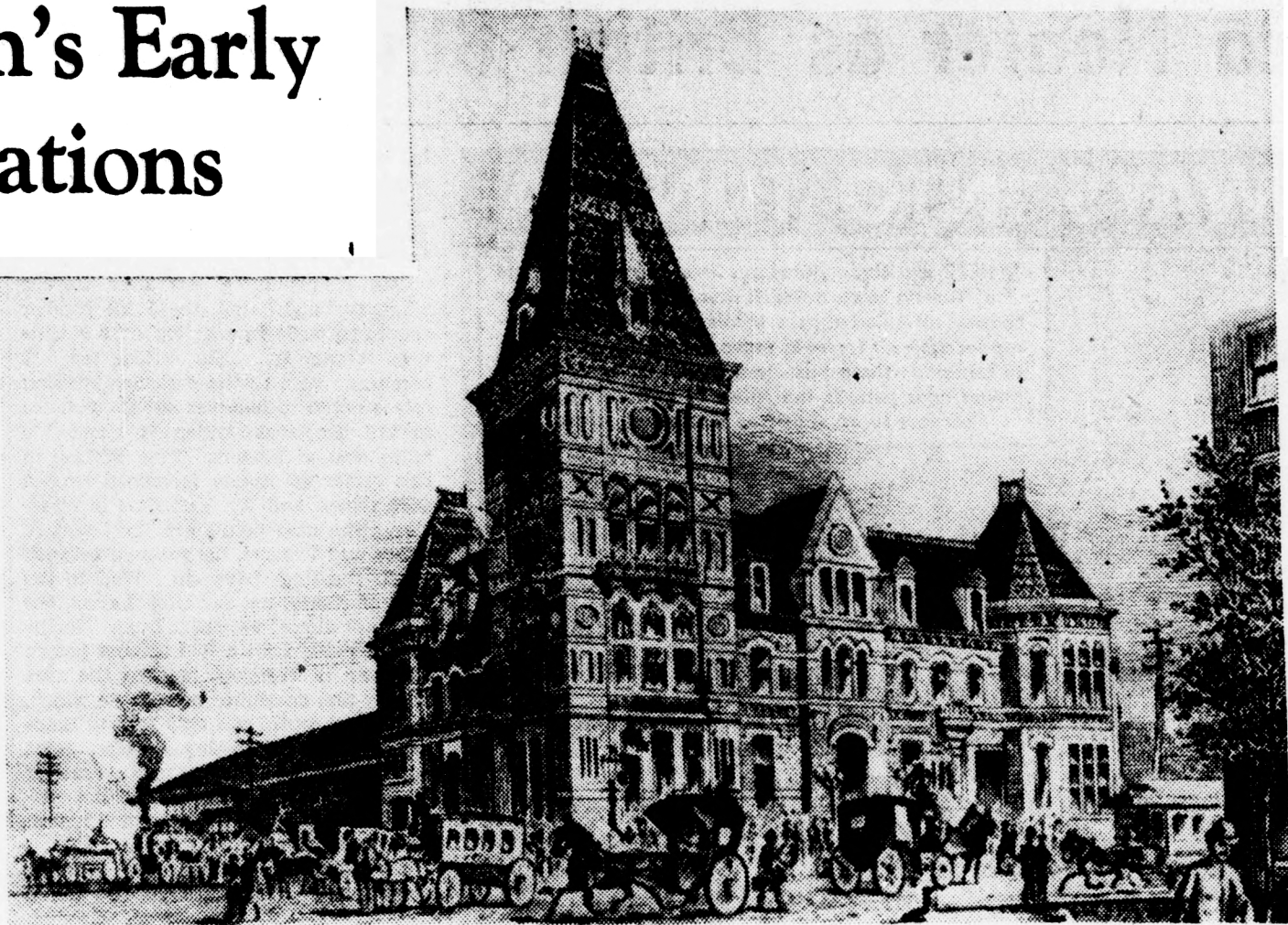
It is very interesting to see pictures in *The Star*, from time to time, showing the crowds and the traffic congestion in and around the Union Station, due, of course, to the present war condition and the abnormal number of people who are coming in and going out of this great railroad depot every twenty-four hours, and every day of the week, resulting, naturally, in greatly overtaxing the capacity of the huge building.

The erection of this depot was begun in 1903 and completed October 15, 1907. The cost incidental to its construction was about \$180,000,000, of which the Government appropriated \$5,000,000.

The central pavilion is modeled after the Arch of Constantine and its outlines preserve the central idea of a colossal city portal. The passenger concourse is 760 feet in length, and an army of 50,000 men could stand on the floor. The main waiting room is 220 by 130 feet, with a height of 120 feet, and in each end is a circular window 75 feet in diameter.

The erection of this structure was undoubtedly brought about—directly or indirectly—by *The Star's* efforts to minimize grade-crossing accidents and to clear the Mall of the Baltimore & Potomac Railroad Depot and its sheds and tracks, and to restore that reservation as a park in keeping with the intention of those who planned the city, and to this end *The Star* worked unceasingly for years.

Valuable data was contributed on this subject by the present editor of *The Star*, Theodore W. Noyes, when traveling abroad in 1892, and at other times, in which he described the great railroad stations of Berlin, Frankfurt, Paris and London, which showed that the foreign conception of a capital included an ar-



The Baltimore & Potomac Railroad Depot at Sixth street and Constitution avenue, removed in 1908. It was here that President Garfield was shot on July 2, 1881.

day morning at 10 o'clock to convey the members of the Corporations of Washington, Alexandria and Georgetown to Bladensburg, to meet the trains from Baltimore.

On August 26, the day following the opening, the *Intelligencer* prints the following:

"Opening of the Railroad.

"Yesterday was a great day on the new railroad between Baltimore and Washington, being the first day of its

by the editors that a further account will later appear by one of its contributors, and the following, printed on August 27, is most likely the one referred to:

Dedication Ceremonies

"At 10 o'clock in the forenoon on Tuesday, the corporate authorities of Washington, the Mayor of Georgetown and a number of the members of the corporation of Georgetown and Alexandria, with the Marine Band, proceeded in two

The Baltimore Patriot waited three days after the event to tell us:

"About half-past 8 in the morning the invited guests, consisting of the executive of the State, members of the Legislature, the Mayor and the City Council of Baltimore and a large concourse of ladies and gentlemen were seen flocking from all directions to the railroad depot in South Charles street * * *"

The Metropolitan, a newspaper pub-



Arrival of Federal troops at the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad Station, New Jersey avenue and C street, in 1861.

Quite a difference in wages will be noted here between those of 1835 and 1942. It reminds the writer of an item he read in a newspaper printed in 1837, which read: "The carpenters of Detroit paraded the streets of that city with a banner thus inscribed:

"Ten hours a day
And two dollars pay."

Which sounds more like a dream than a fact.

One of the interesting things in connection with the question of wages of the period of 1835 and later is that as salaries advanced railroad fares became cheaper. As evidence of this is an announcement appearing in the *Intelligencer* of June 11, 1853, which says:

"The Railroad Fare Reduced—At the meeting of the directors of the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad on Wednesday it was decided to reduce the fare between Baltimore and Washington from \$1.80 to \$1.25, and for tickets to go and return on the same day from \$2 to \$1.50. The new rates are to go into effect on the 1st of July next. We hail this movement with pleasure, and confidentially hope that at no distant day we shall be able to announce that the trip between Washington and Baltimore may be made for a dollar, and the round trip at a correspondingly low rate."

It is but natural to suppose that during the 17 years the B. & O. depot remained at Second street and the Avenue, that many important events transpired there, and this is certainly a logical conclusion. Indeed, it was from here that a number of young Washingtonians, who had formed themselves into a military organization for mutual protection while crossing the planes to California on the discovery of gold, departed, and it was also from here that the District volunteers took their departure for the Mexican War. Gen. William Henry Harrison arrived at this station in February, 1841, just prior to taking the oath of office as President, and it is recorded that his arrival here was during a snowstorm.

Larger Depot Is Built

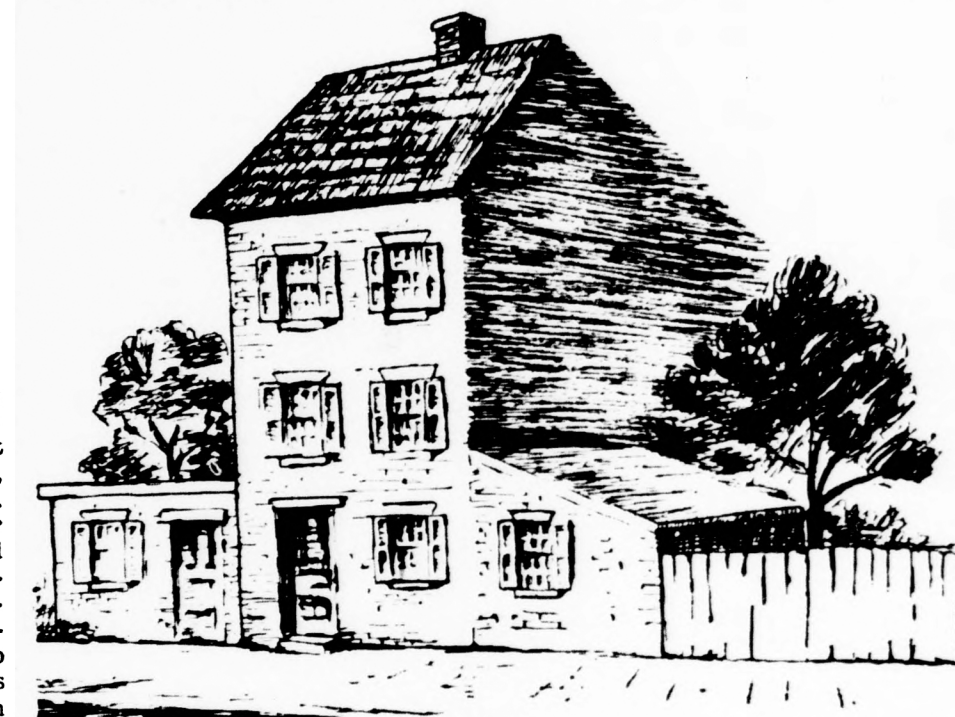
However, it was not long before Washington had outgrown this small depot, but the railroad company seems to have anticipated this at the time it bought the Avenue site, for about this time it also bought square 632, bounded by North Capitol street and New Jersey avenue, C and D streets N.W., and here, at the northeast corner of New Jersey avenue and C street, it erected its second depot, which was completed in 1852.

To thousands of Washingtonians this railroad station is still recalled, especially during the 80s and 90s, when Bay Ridge and Chesapeake Beach were two of our most important water resorts. It was then, during the summer months, that crowds of excursionists could be seen daily assembled at the depot ready to go for a day's outing on the bay. The fare

was frequently only 25 cents to Chesapeake Beach and twice that amount to Bay Ridge. The bathing at the former resort was particularly good and the attractions included dancing, horse racing and all sorts of amusements, and the crabs were always biting. But Bay Ridge was in Anne Arundel County, and this county finally went dry, and that was the beginning of the end of Bay Ridge.

During the Civil War this depot was a very important point, a center of great interest, where large crowds gathered day and night to witness the arrival of troops from the North. The 6th United States Infantry upon arriving there took quarters in the old Crutcher Building on the square and the Government soon

The site of this depot is undoubtedly the most historic spot in the Mall, for here it was that President Garfield was shot on July 2, 1881. This is an old story, but the facts are about as follows: The President had left the White House and had arrived at the depot about 9:20 a.m. He lingered there a few minutes in his carriage, talking to Secretary Blaine, before entering the depot by way of the ladies' entrance, which was on the B street side of the building, the two men passing through the ladies' waiting room arm in arm. However, they had not proceeded far when two shots rang out in quick succession, the shooting having been done by Charles J. Guiteau, who had approached the President from the rear.



Washington's first railroad station, the Baltimore & Ohio Depot, which stood at Second street and Pennsylvania avenue. Occupied in 1835.

erected a large frame building nearby to accommodate the troops and called it "Soldier's Rest."

The Baltimore & Potomac Railroad Co., which was located at Sixth and Constitution avenue (formerly B street), was chartered by Maryland in 1853 and in 1867 Congress passed an act allowing it to enter the District. At first it established its depot in South Washington at Ninth and C streets S.W., by virtue of an act of Congress.

In 1871 and 1872 the Common Council first, and then Congress, authorized the company to establish its depot at the corner of Sixth and B streets N.W., on land which was marked on the maps as a great public park, but which had never been improved and was partly covered by unsightly shacks, crazy sheds and miscellaneous debris, which had accumulated through many years of neglect.

The weapon used by the assassin was of the British bulldog revolver type, with a short barrel, and noted for its inaccuracy, which accounted for the first bullet passing through the right coat sleeve of the President and doing no injury. The second shot, however, was more true and entered the body above the third rib, where the .44-caliber bullet lodged under the pancreas and stomach, about two-and-one-half inches to the front and left of the spinal column.

No doubt there are still living a number of people who are familiar with this dastardly crime, but few who had the opportunity for getting at the facts as did the late Dr. William Tindall, whose services with the city government began when the District was governed by a Mayor, a Board of Aldermen and a Common Council; who was secretary when the Capital had a territorial form of government, and who passed away a few years ago, but still rendering valuable service to his adopted city up to the time of his death.

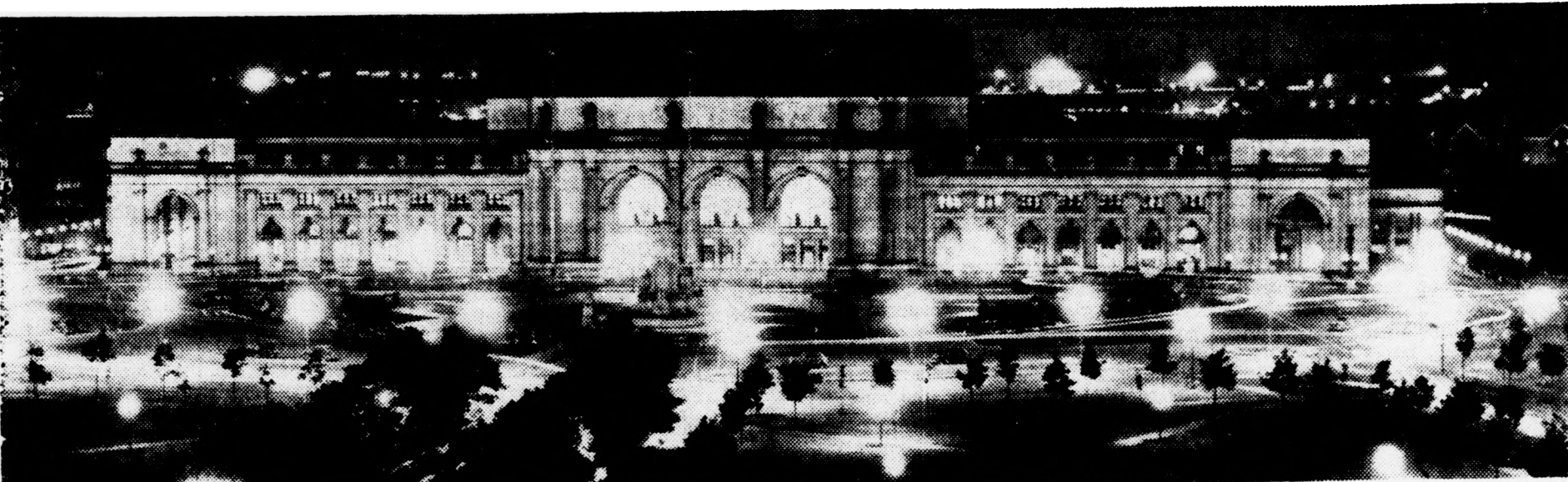
At the time this crime was committed Dr. Tindall was secretary to the Board of Commissioners and his story of the sad event, as delivered before the Columbia Historical Society some years ago, is interesting enough to repeat. In part, he said:

"While busy at my desk in the office of the Commissioners of the District of Columbia, which was then housed in the Morrison Building on the west side of Four-and-a-half street, now John Marshall place, a few minutes before 10 o'clock on the morning of July 2, 1881, I was startled by the abrupt entrance of the office messenger and his excited exclamation that 'Vice President Arthur has just been killed at the Baltimore & Potomac Railroad Station.' (Of course, the messenger was mistaken, for it was the President who had been shot.)

"I immediately left the building to go to the station, but, upon reaching the northwest corner of Four-and-a-half street and Pennsylvania avenue, where the police headquarters was then situated, was attracted by two detectives leading a man up the outside steps on the Four-and-a-half street side of the building, by means of which access was had to the second story, where the office of the superintendent of police was quartered.

"I followed them up the steps, and when I reached the top, the man in custody of the officers turned his face toward me and smiled at me with a silly sort of leer. Some years before, when territorial form of government for the District of Columbia was in force, one of the prominent participants in the local political gatherings in the voting district in which I then resided was a highly nervous, excitable man of more than ordinary mental culture but regarded as somewhat eccentric. The man under arrest so nearly resembled this man in appearance that I thought it was he and was about to address him as such and ask him why he was under police restraint, when one of the officers whispered to me, 'This is Guiteau, the man who shot the President.' It was Charles J. Guiteau."

The President was soon borne to the White House, where he lay until September 6, when it was felt that a change to Elberon, N. J., might prove of benefit, but after lingering until the 19th of the month, he quietly passed away.



Night view of Washington's present Union Station.

tistic, munificent treatment of its railroad facilities.

History Being Made

Naturally, this depot played a very important part in the first World War, but not to the same extent it is doing today. And since it was not in existence during the Spanish-American War, it could not have played any part at that time. But just now a great deal of history is being made in and around this station, which will make most interesting reading in days to come.

The first steam railroad station in this city was occupied as such by the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad for many years. It stood at the northwest corner of Second street and Pennsylvania avenue N.W., until removed in 1869. When the first railroad train entered this city on August 25, 1835, it became, quite naturally, one of the first railroad depots opened in this country.

One hundred and seven years make quite a difference in any city, and the Washington of today, aside from its comparison to the L'Enfant plan, bears little resemblance, indeed, to the Washington of 1835, when the steam engines George Washington, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson and James Madison came puffing into the National Capital for the first time, bringing along distinguished guests from the Monumental City, to be discharged near the old Tiber Creek, which then crossed the Avenue at Second street.

In connection with the opening of this early railroad station, of a little more than a century ago, it might well be said, and with a degree of certainty, that a hundred years hence, when our successors are seeking information of the present period they will find it much easier than we do today of early news, for the press of this era is generally more generous in giving fuller details of the more interesting happenings of the day than was the case a century ago, when frequently we find little said of things we now consider of prime importance. And so it was with the opening of the first railroad depot in Washington, regarding which there is much not covered in the early reports.

However, the cause for this brevity on local current events is easily discovered by those who like to read old newspapers, for they soon see that everything—including even births, deaths and marriages—is at times sidetracked for political news. Nearly all newspapers of a hundred years ago—and many even more recently—were either owned outright by the political parties themselves or at least to an extent subsidized by them, and what Mr. Clay, Mr. Calhoun or Mr. Webster had to say about States' rights or the tariff was far more important to the papers than some mere local celebration, and that is why the historian sometimes falls back on his imagination.

First Railroad Depot

The running of the first railroad train into Washington and the opening of the first railroad depot was not only one factor in the dawn of an epoch in the United States, but a great historic event in the National Capital as well, and yet we find comparatively little said of it in advance of its occurrence. Indeed, the *National Intelligencer* of August 24, 1835, briefly states:

"The Opening of the Baltimore and Washington Railroad.

"Two cars will leave the ticket office, at the intersection of Second street west and Pennsylvania avenue, this day (Monday) at 4 o'clock p.m., to convey the invited guests to Baltimore, to join the train from Baltimore on Tuesday morning.

"A car will leave Washington on Tues-

being opened for travel all the way from the depot at Baltimore to the foot of the Capitol Hill in this city.

"It was a glorious sight to see four trains of cars, with each its engine, extending altogether several hundred yards in length, making their entry by this new route, to the delight of thousands of spectators in the grounds directly north of the Capitol.

"These cars, besides bringing back our own mayor and members of the corporation and city guests who went out to meet them, brought about as many ladies and gentlemen of Baltimore as made up the whole numbers of about a thousand persons carried by the cars.

"These, accompanied by two bands of music, after debarking, marched in procession to Gadsby's and Brown's Hotels, at both of which sumptuous and bounteous entertainment was provided and liberally partaken of.

"The cars arrived at a little before 10 o'clock, and at 4 our friends from Baltimore re-embarked and returned to their homes without, we trust, any accident or other inconvenience than what was occasioned by the dust on the roads and streets."

At the close of this item we are told

capacious cars to the late depot, 5 miles from the city, where at a little after 12 o'clock they were met by the several trains from Baltimore bringing the directors of the railroad company, the Governor of the State of Maryland and some hundreds of ladies and gentlemen, with a band of music. A great portion of the company from both cities left their respective cars and spent some time in mutual welcome and congratulations, under the inspiring music of the two fine bands, after which the Mayor of Washington in the presence of a large concourse addressed to the president of the railroad company * * *

"The company, having reascended the cars, proceeded on to this city, as already stated, and after spending a few hours in taking refreshments liberally provided by the railroad company, visiting the Capitol and other points of attraction about the city, our visitors took their departure on their return to Baltimore, in excellent humor and without (as far as we know) the slightest accident. To doubt their admiration and due appreciation of the great work over which they traversed would be to betray an ignorance of the public spirit which has always distinguished the inhabitants of the Monumental City."

lished in Georgetown from 1820 to 1837, tells us under date of 1835 that the locomotive then operating between Washington and Baltimore was named the Arabian. In this connection it is known that an engine called the Arabian, designed by Phineas Davis and built by the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad Co. in 1834, was operated for a while over the line between here and Baltimore, and it was this type of engine, with upright boiler, that was followed by the building of four locomotives previously mentioned as having taken part in the first entrance of the Iron Horse into Washington. An interesting item about this early locomotive says:

"The Arabian ran with the Frederick passenger train up to Plane No. 1, 50 successive days, 82 miles a day, without a lay-off or repairs of any kind, and this was then considered to be something of a record. Her daily expenses came to \$13.25, divided in this fashion: One and one-fourth tons of coal at \$6 a ton; oil at 50 cents, the engineer's wages, \$2; the fireman's, \$1.50; an interest charge of 75 cents and a contingency fund of \$1. It was estimated that she did the work each day that it would have required 113 horses to accomplish, and, of course, at vastly less cost."