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Union Baptist and B&O Launch Oral Archives Project: African American Experiences with the Railroad

Baltimore, MD – February 12, 2021 – The B&O Railroad Museum, in partnership with Union Baptist Church of Baltimore, is working to bring to light never before heard stories of the African American experience with the railroad system within the United States starting with the B&O and onward! This collection of curated oral histories will explore the intertwined history of the railroad and the African American community and seeks to connect the dots from the railroad's conception to the present day.

In celebration of Black History Month, the B&O has released a video preview of the project with excerpts from three contrasting stories. The preview offers first-hand accounts of riding in a segregated car, working to recruit a more diverse workforce for the railroad and traveling cross-country by rail. The video will be playing inside the Museum daily for the month of February.

The purpose of the oral archives is to preserve and collect oral histories of the African American experience on American railroads, and in particular - but not exclusively - the B&O Railroad. This will have the effect of adding to the museum's knowledge base of African American history in relation to American railroading as well as help preserve the everyday experience of African Americans traveling and working on the railroad for research. The project's goal is to record a robust collection of stories illustrating the fully array of impacts of the railroad industry on African Americans in both the Baltimore area and the United States as a whole.



Evelyn Chatmon, Contributor

The B&O is actively seeking participants from across the country who are willing to share their personal histories, perspectives, and experiences. In light of the pandemic,

and to allow participants in other parts of the country to join in, all interviews are recorded online through the Zoom video conferencing platform.

To learn more about contributing to this important ongoing project and to watch the video, visit www.BORail.info/OralHistory.

Visiting the B&O

All activities and events are designed for a safe and fun visit to the B&O Railroad Museum's sprawling 40-acre campus. Occupancy has been reduced to meet state and city guidelines; additionally, face masks and safe social distancing practices are required for all visitors, staff, and volunteers. The Museum's full safety measures can be found at www.BORail.events/Visit.

About the B&O Railroad Museum

The B&O Railroad Museum, a full affiliate of the Smithsonian Institution, is dedicated to the preservation and interpretation of American railroading and its impact on American society, culture and economy. The Museum is home to the oldest, most comprehensive collection of railroad artifacts in the Western Hemisphere including an unparalleled roster of 19th and 20th century railroad equipment. The 40-acre historic site is regarded as the birthplace of American Railroading and includes the 1851 Mt. Clare Station, the 1884 Baldwin Roundhouse and first mile of commercial railroad track in America. For further information on the B&O Railroad Museum, please call 410-752-2490 or visit www.BORail.org.

About Union Baptist Church

The Union Baptist Church has a proud history of involvement in the civil rights movement, dating back to 1892 when pastor Dr. Harvey Johnson, a friend of W.E.B. DuBois, withdrew the church from the Maryland Baptist Union Association due to discrimination and went on to organize the Colored Baptist Convention. The withdrawal effectively made Union Baptist the first independent African American Baptist church in Maryland.

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