



Ashland Kentucky, 1948 By Gene Huddleston

There were two routes for C&O's premium passenger train, *The George Washington*, west of Ashland, Kentucky. One continued down the Ohio Valley on curves of no more than two degrees and no adverse grades to speak of to the Queen City of the Midwest, Cincinnati. The other proceeded so crookedly across the state of Kentucky to Louisville that the Lexington division was nicknamed the "Pea Vine." Part of each route's adaptation to its topography was finding the right steam locomotive for each route. That is why this morning in July, 1948 No. 1 has an L-2 heavy Hudson for the trip down the Ohio and why No. 21 has a heavy Kanawha type. (The difference in number of driving wheels and in their diameters says it all: 6 78-inch for the 4-6-4 and 8 69-inch for the 2-8-4.)

The reason I had gotten up at 4:30 and drove to Ashland in my Dad's '34 Dodge was in hopes of seeing one of the five brand new L-2a Hudsons with the Franklin System of Steam Distribution. When No. 1 pulled in promptly at 5:16 AM EST I saw it had one of the 1942 L-2 classes. I knew then I had about 15 minutes to decide what to do. There, sitting on one of the depot tracks reserved for Lexington Division trains, was K-4 2741 coupled onto No. 21. The only way to salvage something useful from getting up so early was to photograph this locomotive in action leaving Ashland.

This seems a good place to ask how did 2741 get to Ashland, which happened every morning, for No. 21 merited and got a big K-4 equipped with steam heat couplings and necessary communicating hoses. The old AC&I

engine terminal at Ashland did not handle such large locomotives. The only sure berthing at this time I knew about was an AC&I engine house for the F-16 Pacific that took the Big Sandy local south each day.

In order to get my action picture, I started walking west from the train shed area to the long curve that led to Ashland Tunnel. I knew from past experience with photographing J-2 Mountain types on No. 23 that the engine would be exhausting smoke and steam high into the air because the long curve was on an adverse grade. I also knew from riding No. 23 (from Ashland to Olive Hill) that besides an adverse .85 percent grade, there was the added "drag" of a running brake application. This was required, I believe, whenever a through train was uncoupled to either cut out or add cars. It was fun to sit in a heavy weight coach and hear the brake shoes take hold under the car until the train definitely slowed, then as the grinding sound died out to feel the speed pick up again.

Walking as fast as possible to get ahead of No. 21, I knew I did not have much more time after No. 1 departed. I did get most of the way around the curve and the resulting picture was on the curve at approximately the spot where I caught F7 7030 on Lexington Division about 1956. (See *C&O History* May, 2009, pg. 21.) The main difference is that 7030 has come with its fairly long train straight south from the mainline junction at 6th St. through the passenger line diamond at AX Cabin, while 2741 has curved south from the passenger line to join the Lexington Division

freight line. The backgrounds of both pictures show mostly the same structures. However, only the view of 2741 shows (left background) the Armco Steel blast furnace at Sixth Street, which was then one of the oldest still producing in the U.S.

Tom Dixon has researched No. 21's consist in 1948 and compared it with the nine cars actually showing. He notes that behind the engine is a 3-door horse express car (perhaps modified into a regular express car). Then comes a Hariman roof mail and express car. Next probably is an 800-series "day coach" of 1942. This apparently was the divided coach (designated in No. 21's consist) to enforce racial segregation on intrastate travel. (This writer recalls the conductor on No. 23 out of Ashland asking me to move because I was seated in section of the 1600 series coach reserved for Blacks. The entire section was empty!) The two cars with fluted sides had been purchased for the *Chessie*, C&O's daylight streamliner. One is a family coach in the 1700-1702 series. James Kemper Millard rightfully says of these Budd creations, "*Perhaps no other car in the consist reflects The Chessie's wholesome character and high hopes as does the unique family coach.*" The 2nd car was one of the 1500-1511 series 44 passenger coaches with a lounge. Both these coaches reflect well on C&O's passenger service to two great Southern cities, Lexington and Louisville in Kentucky. The next 1920's era car is probably the diner, followed by cars taken off No. 1 at Ashland—a day coach and 2 "sleepers," as labeled on C&O's consist sheet.