



The C&O Station at Mt. Sterling, Kentucky

Thomas W. Dixon, Jr.

Mt. Sterling, Kentucky, is located at milepost L90 (90 miles from Ashland Junction, just west of the passenger station in Ashland) on the former C&O Lexington Subdivision, running from Ashland to Lexington, and there connecting with the Louisville & Nashville with track-age rights into Louisville. This was the route traveled by the "Kentucky Sections" of the mainline trains such as the *George Washington* and the *FFV*.

The Lexington Subdivision was a secondary line, albeit an important one because of its connection to Louisville and the further connections for both freight and passenger traffic offered at that important terminal city.

The station structures along this line dated from various eras going back to the early development of the line as the Elizabethtown, Lexington & Big Sandy and its incorporation into the C&O in the 1880s. Some of the smaller station structures along the route used a design that must have descended from EL&BS days as they are unlike other C&O structures in general appearance or details. Those depots that conform to C&O standards are gener-

ally of the 1920 standard. This was a rectangular structure with little or no eaves overhang, no decorations, and a rectangular bay window, using the usual board-and-batten siding (see *Chesapeake & Ohio Standard Structures*, page 20).

During the first decade of the 20th century the C&O was building brick and frame stations that were different from the current standards. Generally these structures appeared in larger towns, and are most commonly found in Kentucky and Virginia. There was never a standard drawing for this design, which consisted of a waiting room construction with a steeply pitched hipped roof, often intersected with a cross gable or large dormer window on one or both sides. Appended to many was a freight/express storage area that had a lower-profile roof, and was appended to one end of the waiting room area.

Several stations of this general design appeared on the Lexington Subdivision, including Olive Hill, Morehead, and Mt. Sterling. A similar station was located on the Big Sandy Subdivision at Louisa (destroyed by fire about 20 years ago) and on the main line at Russell (now modified) and

This circa-1944 view looks west to show the Mt. Sterling station from the track side. (C&O Railway photo, C&OHS Collection)

Catlettsburg (now a residence), Kentucky. A similar brick station, now used as a library, can still be seen at Crozet, Va., on the Mountain Subdivision.

Because of the substantial nature of the brick stations, they have survived the end of the railroad and the removal of tracks at the three locations on the former Lexington Subdivision.

The Mt. Sterling station was strictly for passengers, since a substantial brick freight station with a large two-story headhouse and a spacious freight storage area stood just to the east. To accommodate express business a separate structure was built adjacent to the platform just to the west of the passenger station building.

The main building consisted of a ticket office located where the bay window protrudes, a ladies waiting room to the west, a general waiting room in the middle, and a "colored" waiting room to the far east end of the structure (Kentucky then being a state

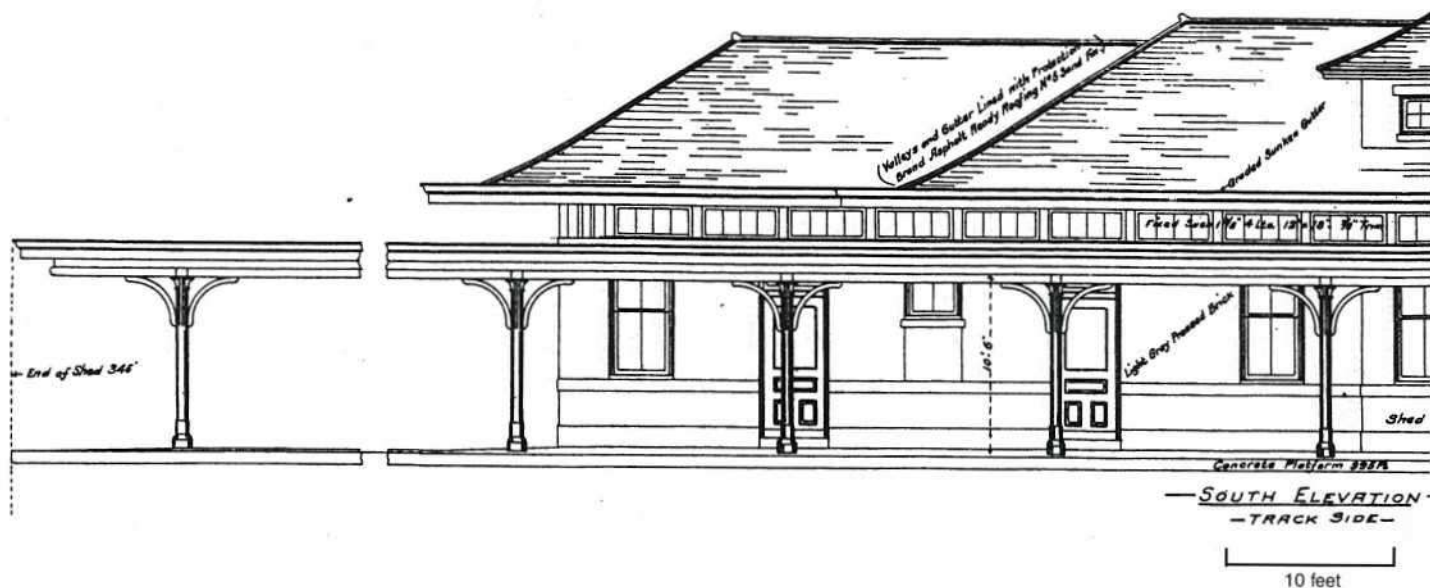
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— PASSENGER DEPOT —

— MT. STERLING, KY. —

— C. & O. Ry. —

Office Eng'r M. of Way —



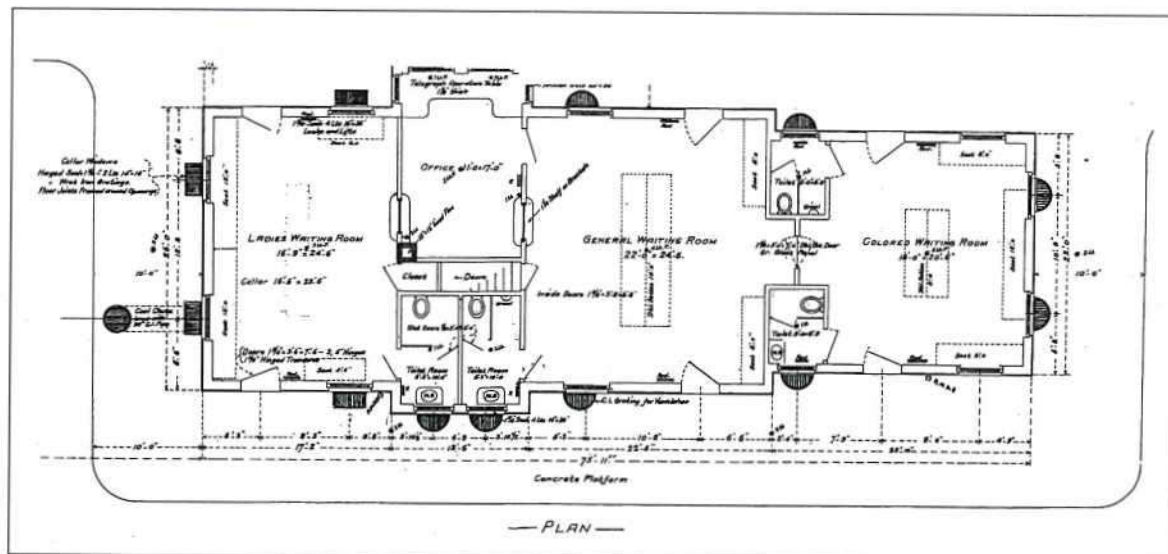
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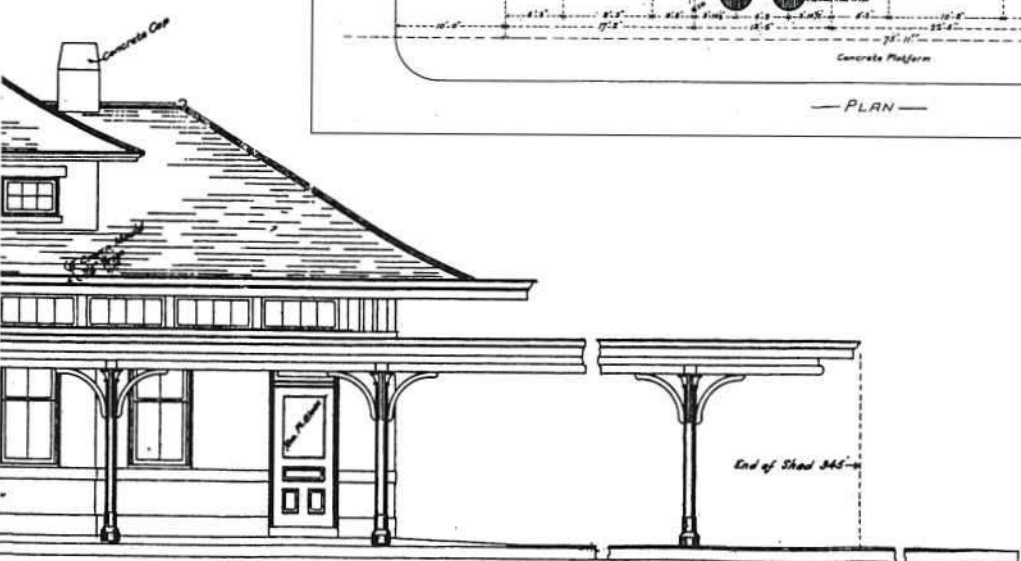
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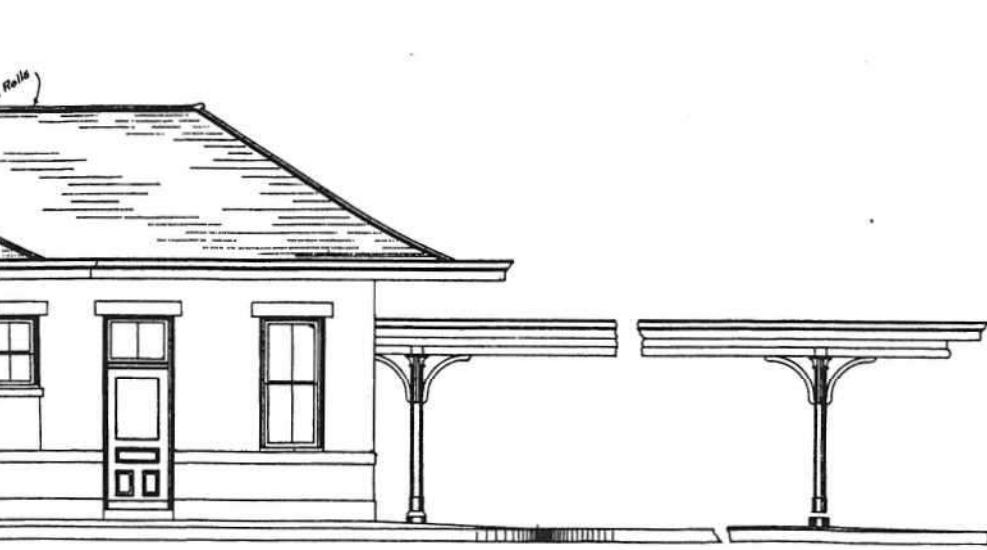




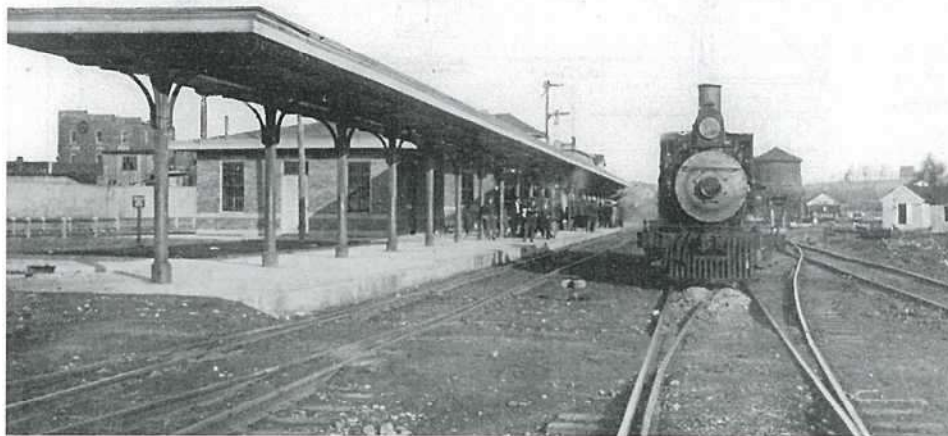
June - 1909.



June - 1909.

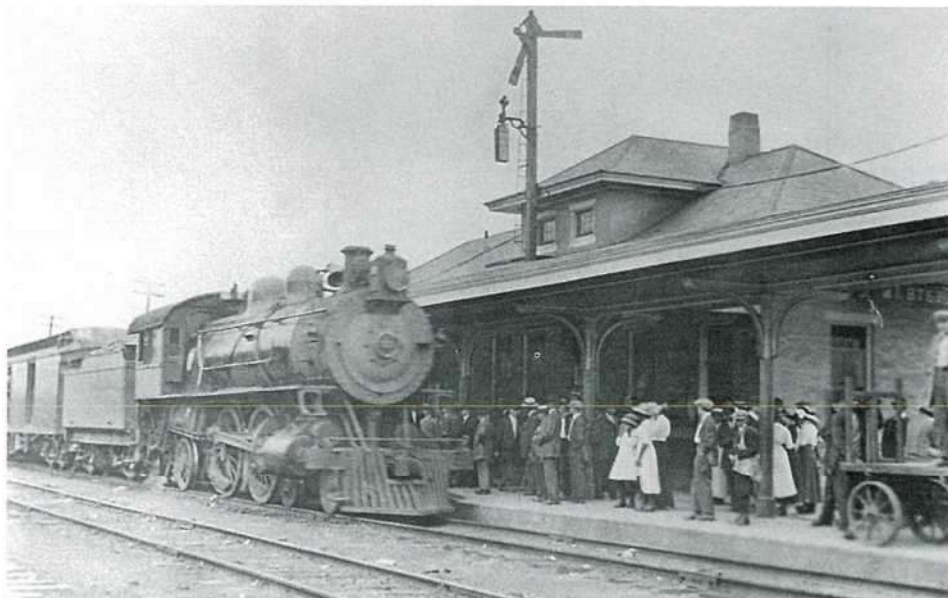


C. & O. DEPOT, MT. STERLING, KY.



Taken from a real-photo postcard of about 1915, this scene shows the Mt. Sterling station soon after it was built, with a tall-stacked switcher working the yard. The water tank and sundry buildings are visible to the right rear, with the roof of the freight station barely visible over the platform canopy. (C&OHS Collection)

This circa 1918 scene shows one of the C&O's classic "high-stepping" A-16 Atlantic 4-4-2s with a passenger train arriving at Mt. Sterling, awaited by a goodly crowd. (Ed Lyon Collection)



with "Jim Crow" laws). There was a 395-foot platform on the track side of the station, protected by a canopy or shed over 345 feet of its length. The canopy was supported by single pillars.

The original C&O drawings, prepared by the Engineer of Maintenance-of-Way, show a date of June 1909, so I have assumed that the structure was completed soon thereafter.

The 1906 *C&O Official Industrial Directory and Shippers' Guide* says of Mt. Sterling: "Much livestock is raised and shipped from this point. This is one of the many prosperous towns located on the C&O Ry. It has four successful banks, flour mill, two wholesale grocers, ice factory, two planing mills, glove factory, one distillery, and three newspapers. It is the junction point for the Kentucky & South Atlantic Branch of the C&O." This branch extended to Rothwell, Kentucky. Operations on this line were discontinued in 1931, and the line was abandoned in 1933.

The 1950 *C&O Industrial Directory* listed the following facilities at Mt. Sterling: Team track with 11-car capacity, cattle pen track with four-car capacity, Table track with seven-car capacity, Stock pens with one chute, six lots, and 50-ton capacity track scales. Twenty-two major industries are shown, 12 of which had their own private siding (the remainder used the team track). The population is shown as 4782. The entry is reproduced below.

[The 1950 *C&O Industrial Directory* has a wealth of information of this type and can be ordered from the C&OHS, as item DS-02-217. The price is \$14.95. All stations are listed with facilities shown and industries served.]

The Mt. Sterling depot building is a good representative of a typical mid-sized station of the early 20th century, a type of station in service usually to the end of passenger trains. We would like a reader to inform us of its current status and use. \$

MT. STERLING, KY. (Montgomery County)

Population—4,782

Electricity—Ky. Utilities Co.

Facilities—Team Track—Green St. Track—11 car capacity; Cattle Track—4 car capacity; Table Track—7 car capacity; Stock Pens—1 chute, 6 lots; Track Scales—50-ton capacity—50 feet long.

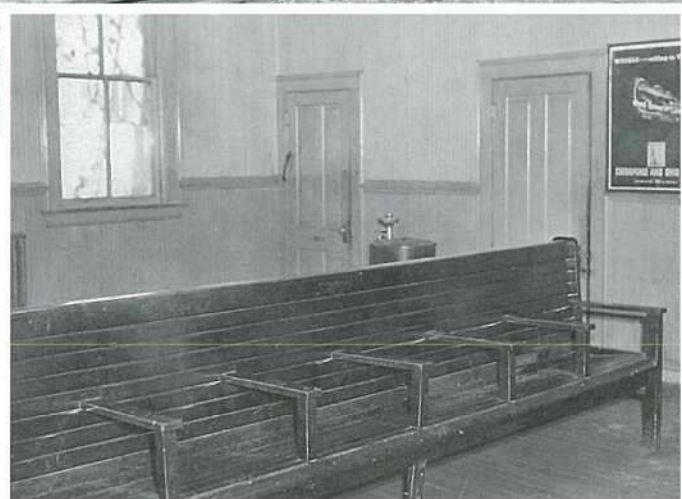
Ashland Oil & Refining Co.	Bulk Gas & Oil	PT
Atlas Concrete Products Co.	Cement Block Plant	TT
Cowden Mfg. Co.	Textile Plant	TT
Enoch Manufacturing Co.	Textile Plant	TT
Farmers Cooperative Stock Yard	Livestock Shipper	TT
Farmers Tobacco Warehouse	Tobacco Warehouse	TT
Gulf Refining Co.	Bulk Gas & Oil	PT
Home Lumber & Supply Co.	Builders Supplies	PT
Highway Concrete Pipe Co.	Concrete Products Plant	PT
Kentucky Utilities Co.	Supply Yard	PT
McClure-Harper Co.	Wholesale Grocer	TT

Elevation—938

Railroad—C&O

Gas—Central Ky. Natural Gas Co.

McCormick Lumber Co.	Builders Supplies	PT
Monarch Milling Co.	Flour & Feed Mill	TT
O'Rear Hardware Co.	Fertilizer, Hardware	TT
Orme & Jewell	Coal, Fuel Oil	PT
Richards, J. W., & Son	Coal, Builders Supplies	PT
Richardson-Stewart Grocery Co.	Wholesale Grocer	TT
Standard Oil Co.	Bulk Gas & Oil	PT
Stoll Oil Refining Co.	Bulk Gas & Oil	PT
Texas Corp.	Bulk Gas & Oil	PT
Walker, A. W., & Son	Contractor	PT
Wilson, Everett	Livestock Shipper	TT



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The old two-story freight station is visible in this eastward-looking circa-1944 photo, with a couple of box cars beside its platform. (C&O Railway photo, C&OHS Collection)

These interior views show at least three types of benches, water fountains, a Chiclets vending machine, and WWII War Bonds posters, as well as the ticket window. (C&O Railway photos, C&OHS Collection)





The C&O Station at Mt. Sterling, Kentucky

above: The weed-grown freight station shows age and neglect in 1975. This was probably a combination passenger and freight station before the new structure was erected a short distance to the west about 1909. (T. W. Dixon, Jr.)

These August 1973 views show the station and adjacent express building with the platform canopy removed. The freight station is visible in the background of the lower photo. (Both, T. W. Dixon, Jr.)

