



Chesapeake & Ohio's Pere Marquettes: America's First Post-War Streamliners

Thomas W Dixon

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C&O's subsidiary Pere Marquette Railway was used by C&O's pro-passenger Chairman, Robert R. Young, as a test bed for his ideas on how to cure the passenger train problem in America. He ordered two diesel-powered 7-car lightweight trains that went into service in mid-1946 on the Detroit-Grand Rapids corridor. Over the next year they reversed the passenger losses on this line and actually built up traffic. The trains were the first to emerge all-new from the clogged car builder's shops after WWII. The new trains were of latest design and the on-board services were superb for a coach operation with hostesses, on-board passenger representatives, tickets delivered on the train, credit cards, no-tipping, etc. Many of these things were later tried on C&O's mainline trains, and the equipment showed the way for the huge re-equipping of the name trains on the old C&O in 1950. Eventually affected by the continued erosion of passenger traffic, the trains experienced a slow decline, but lasted as a shadow of themselves down to Amtrak on May 1, 1971. The story is told in great detail from original documents and illustrated with great photos, many of them from C&O official files.

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