

Michael Flanagan's *Stations: An Imagined Journey*

An artist's multi-layered exploration of the railroad landscape

By Matt Kierstead

Autumn 2014 marked the twentieth anniversary of the publication of Michael Flanagan's *Stations: An Imagined Journey* by Pantheon Books. An intimate book of railroad landscape paintings and accompanying fictional narrative, *Stations* is an unconventional creation and appears unique in combining painting, photography, writing, and even aspects of scale modeling. Flanagan wove personal experiences, historical events, and his own images as well as those of others into his romantic "imagined journey," creating not just a book, but an artifact. According to Christopher Sweet, curator of several Flanagan gallery shows, "The book is something, rather than just about something."¹ Harvard University landscape studies professor John Stilgoe, author of the landmark railroad landscape study *Metropolitan Corridor*, said: "No summary can adequately address the layers of character and narrative that embed Flanagan's text and paintings."² *Stations* is indeed complex and benefits from periodic revisiting, which rewards the inquisitive reader as the layers are peeled away.

This article is adapted from a presentation the author made at the Center's annual conference, *Conversations about Photography*, April 13, 2013, at Lake Forest College in Lake Forest, Illinois.

Flanagan's Early Life

Michael Flanagan was born in 1943 in Buffalo, New York. He was raised in Baltimore and Perrysburg, Ohio, where his father bought a house near the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad tracks because he knew Michael was captivated by steam trains. He had family roots in the Shenandoah Valley. Railroad photographs he took in his early teens show thoughtful compositions and interest in the railroad environment. In his early twenties, Flanagan briefly hired out on a Richmond, Fredericksburg & Potomac Railroad track gang. He attended classes at Parsons School of Design and the Yale University Graduate School of Art and Architecture. Flanagan's early paintings include surreal, collage-like landscapes, some containing transportation infrastructure or industrial skylines.

Flanagan's interest in railroads was rekindled in 1980 when he saw O. Winston Link's famous "Hotshot" nighttime

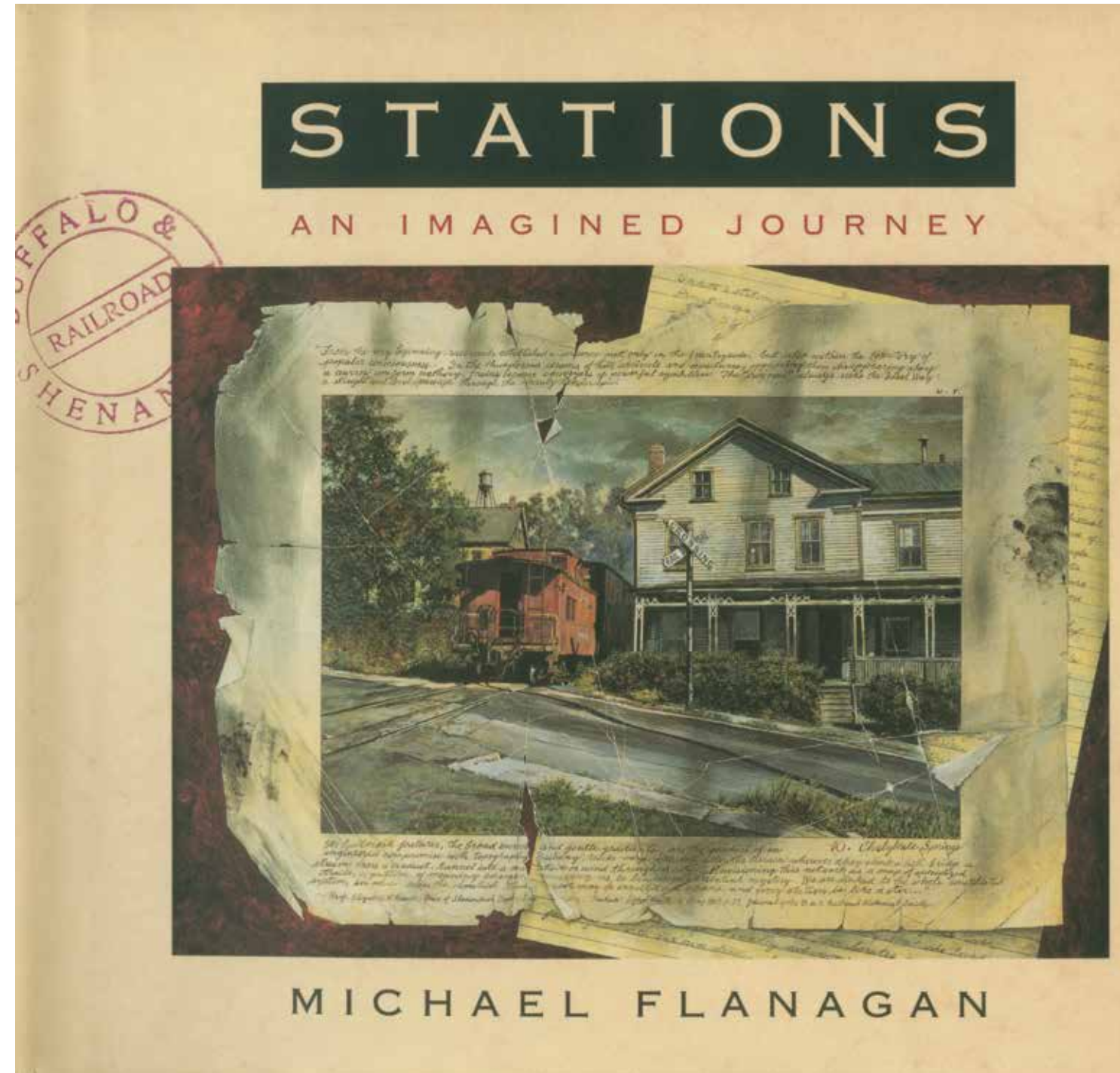
photograph of a Norfolk & Western Railway steam train passing a drive-in movie theater. Flanagan contacted Link, who turned out to be a distant relative, and the two became friends. For Flanagan, "It was like blowing on an ember. It all came rushing back."³ He began collecting railroad books and maps and researching the history of the Ohio and Virginia railroads of his youth. His renewed interest informed his paintings, which appeared in several 1980s gallery shows about landscape, transportation, and change.

Flanagan supported himself as a book designer, with Jacqueline Onassis a notable client. By the late 1980s, Flanagan was represented by the P.P.O.W. Gallery in New York City's Soho district, and around that time he received a request for a small painting—for which he chose railroad imagery. He painted a monochromatic portrait of a Baltimore & Ohio Mikado-type steam locomotive in an industrial setting, with a distressed, hand-annotated border, like a page torn from a book. The border was inspired by an image Flanagan found in a book about painter Francis Bacon of a page from Eadweard Muybridge's human motion studies that Bacon had pinned to his studio wall (see following pages).

The locomotive painting sold quickly and P.P.O.W. encouraged Flanagan to do more railroad paintings. The project became the nucleus of *Stations*. Flanagan said, "After... all this railroad stuff came back...I had no idea what to do with it. So I did one picture. And another. And I wanted it as if someone had found these images in an old album and had added these comments."⁴ As the series progressed, the writing on the borders

Left: Baltimore & Ohio Railroad scene in Perrysburg, Ohio. The photograph, taken by Michael Flanagan in 1957 at age fourteen, shows a thoughtful composition and interest in the environment. Estate of Michael Flanagan

Opposite: The cover of Michael Flanagan's *Stations* features his painting *Chalybeate Springs*, based on a Charles Rotkin photograph taken on the Central Railroad of New Jersey in High Bridge, New Jersey, that appeared in a 1972 *Fortune* magazine essay on eastern U.S. railroads.





An Illustrated Novel

Flanagan realized this body of work had the makings of a book, and he approached Jackie Onassis at Doubleday. She was enthusiastic about the paintings, and said, "What you have here is a story...these people that you write about...I want to know more. Can't you weave more stories around the paintings?"⁶ Flanagan was new to fiction writing and worked intensely for an entire summer on the text. Onassis championed the book as a potential "American classic" and secured a commitment from Doubleday. Pantheon Books ultimately outbid them and printed 20,000 hardbound copies of *Stations* in late 1994.

The title *Stations* reflects Flanagan's fascination with railroad place names, which first struck him as an RF&P employee. He was sent to worksites that were sometimes just "locations," lingering names on old maps or timetables, passed on by generations of railroad men, named for things long gone, perhaps now just a switch in the woods. The thirty-eight *Stations* paintings are executed in a meticulous *trompe l'oeil* technique in a variety of media including casein, oil, tempera, watercolor, ink, and acrylic. Entries in Flanagan's personal notebook indicate that he consciously adopted the compositions, subdued tonal values, and limited color palette of Dutch Renaissance landscape paintings for the *Stations* series, which also reflects mid-nineteenth century American Trompe "bulletin board" paintings by artists like William Harnett and John Frederick Peto.

Stations is not just a book of paintings, it is an illustrated novel. Each painting is flanked by a page of text which at first appears to be from multiple sources, but which is really all Flanagan's writing. His fictional narrator is a retired newspaperman, Lucius Caton. Caton provides a fragmentary biography of his late distant cousin, Russell McKay, an itinerant photographer with a passion for documenting shortline railroads in what he called a "genteel state of decay." McKay was passionate about steam railroading, and dieselization broke

his heart. With nominal corporate backing, McKay documented every named railroad place, or "station," on two rural Virginia shortlines, the Buffalo & Shenandoah and the Powhatan. The resulting photo album is lost, resurfaces suddenly at a yard sale, and is rescued by Lucius Caton. The photographs are a mess, hand-colored and the margins scribbled in by McKay's longtime partner and lover, Anna Beauregard. Flanagan's *Stations* paintings depict these worn, altered photographs. His text on the opposing pages consists of Lucius Caton's transcriptions of their marginalia, his musings on McKay's motivations, and additional explanation

and historic context from seemingly real, obscure academic sources. Like *trompe l'oeil* painting, this narrative style also goes by a French term, *roman a clef*, or "key novel," where reality is masked by fiction and invented characters represent real people. According to Flanagan, elements of some *Stations* characters and parts of the story were drawn from the lives of his family and friends. Clearly, though, *Stations* is also strongly autobiographical, and Flanagan was really talking about himself through his fictional Lucius Caton and Russell McKay.

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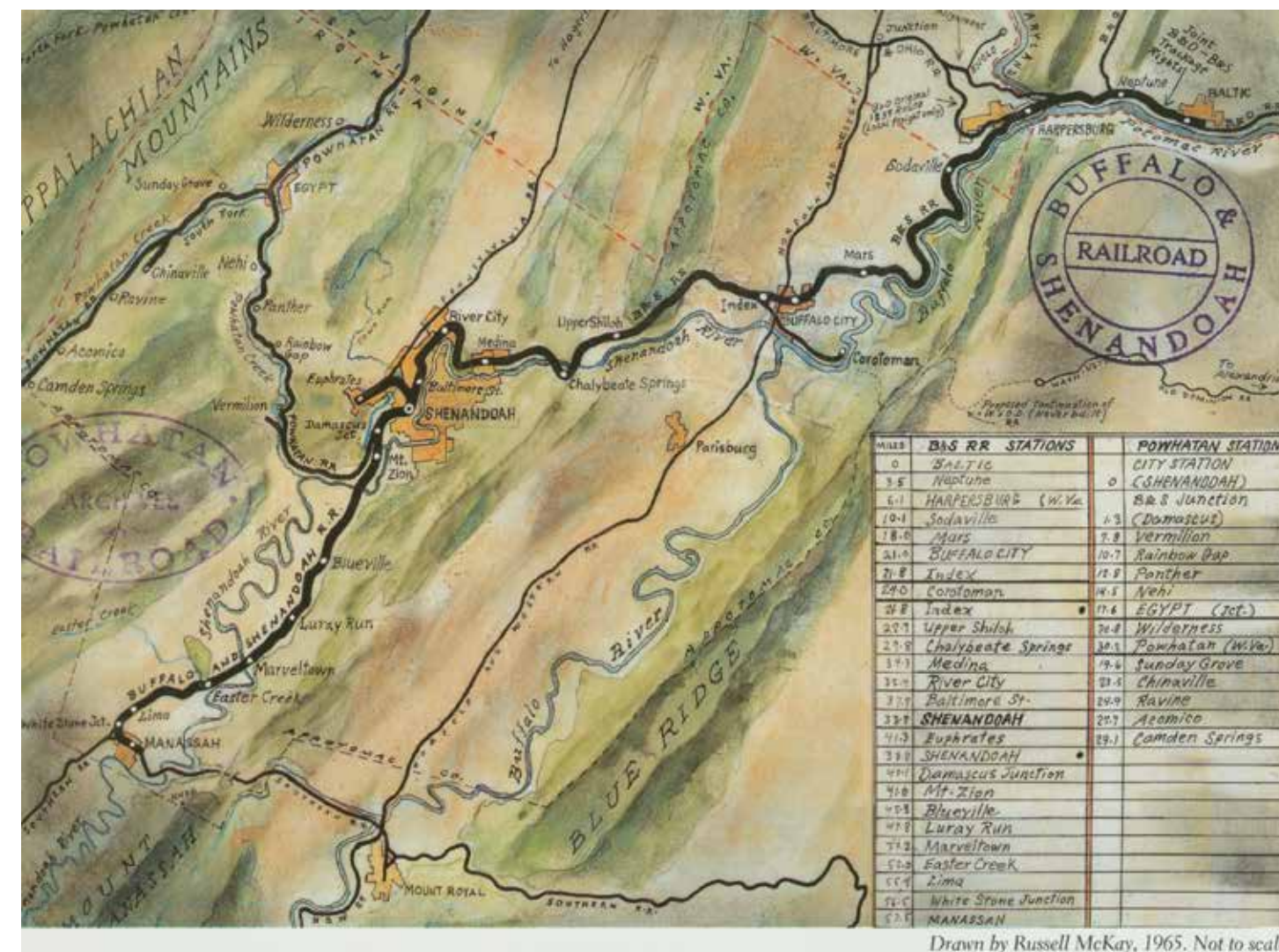
Flanagan's *Railroad Map of Appotomac County, Virginia* depicts the territory for *Stations* and his invented Buffalo & Shenandoah Railroad and Powhatan Railroad.



Top: This early 1990s image of a Baltimore & Ohio Railroad Mikado-type steam locomotive with the faux distressed border was the first that Flanagan painted in the mode that set the parameters for the ensuing series of *Stations* paintings. Estate of Michael Flanagan

Above: Flanagan's distressed borders were inspired by an image he found in a book about painter Francis Bacon showing a page Bacon tore from a book of Eadweard Muybridge's motion studies. Photograph of item from Estate of Michael Flanagan by Matt Kierstead

evolved into a fragmented narrative and became an important layer of expression. According to Flanagan, "...as I began to do the pictures, characters began to emerge from the shadows. The more paintings I did, the richer the text became."⁵ In 1991 P.P.O.W. gave Flanagan a one-man show called "Stations" of twenty-four paintings of his imaginary "Buffalo & Shenandoah Railroad." The show was successful and Flanagan expanded the project, leading to a 1992 exhibition at the Chrysler Museum in Norfolk, Virginia, of eighteen of his "Powhatan Railroad" paintings.

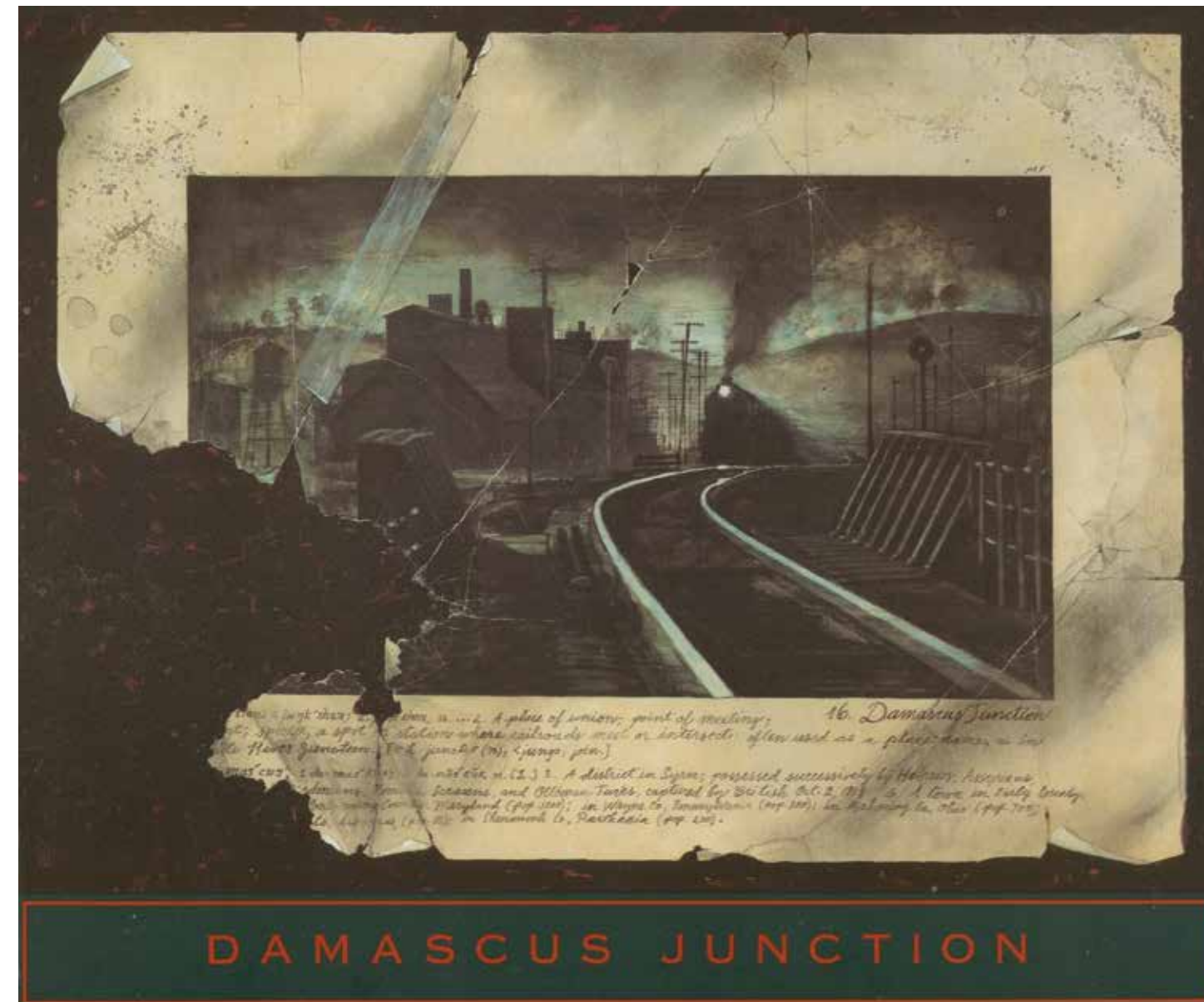


Drawn by Russell McKay, 1965. Not to scale

Right: This Gary Benson image of an eastbound Southern Pacific freight train approaching a siding in Bena, California, east of Bakersfield, c. 1987, appeared in Kalmbach Publishing Company's premier issue of *Trains Illustrated* in 1988. Photo copyright 1991, Gary J. Benson, Courtesy of Susan E. Benson, All Rights Reserved.

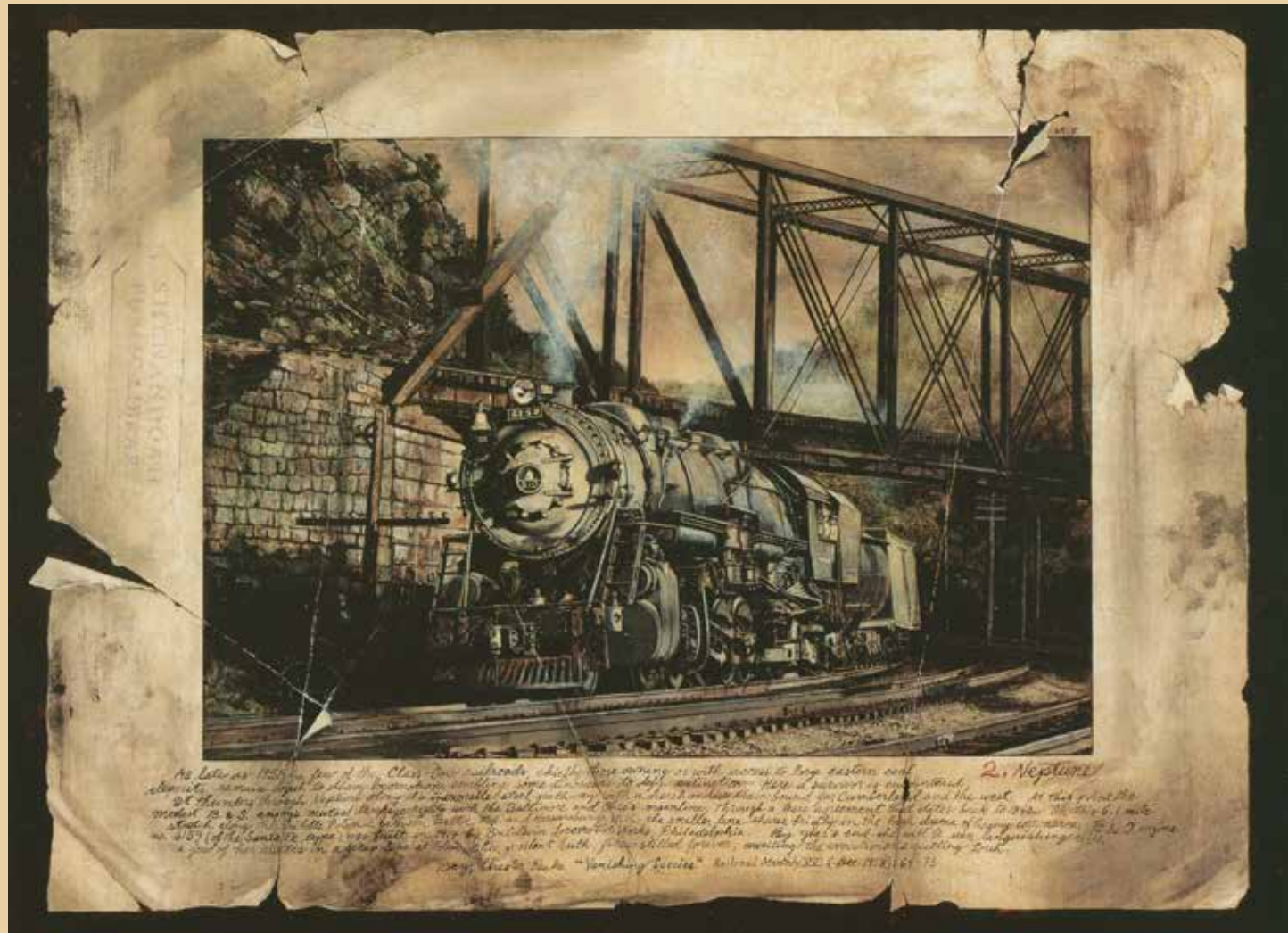


Below: Michael Flanagan's process for adapting other's source photographs to his paintings is demonstrated by this altered study of the Benson photograph, which he mounted on cardboard and began to add steam locomotive smoke and other atmospheric effects. Estate of Michael Flanagan



Damascus Junction is the outcome of Flanagan's adaptation of the Gary Benson photograph, with characteristic Flanagan alterations including reconfigured skyline, different color palette, deletion of a signal, and addition of the ubiquitous *Stations* water tower.

Note: The book design for Stations includes the black text block below each painting with the title in red Copperplate font inside a red border, shown here. These text blocks have been omitted for the rest of the paintings in this article, as they were not part of Flanagan's original work.



Flanagan based *Neptune* on a Robert F. Collins photo taken at the Pennsylvania Railroad bridge over the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad at the west end of the Cumberland (Maryland) Narrows. Collins' photo appeared on the cover of Carstens Publications' *Baltimore & Ohio Heritage*.

My generation, born during World War II, witnessed what Russell called 'the apotheosis of the mechanical age.' We were there by the tracks when the last of the steam engines went pounding by on their way to Valhalla. The way those locomotives worked, you could see everything that was going on, all the machinery in motion...you didn't have to be a fanatic like Russell to appreciate that. Every kid in my neighborhood paid attention when a train came by. You stopped whatever game you were playing and looked in the direction of the tracks and you sort of stood at attention, for the whole grand show, the whistle blowing, those huge spoked wheels rolling so the ground shook under

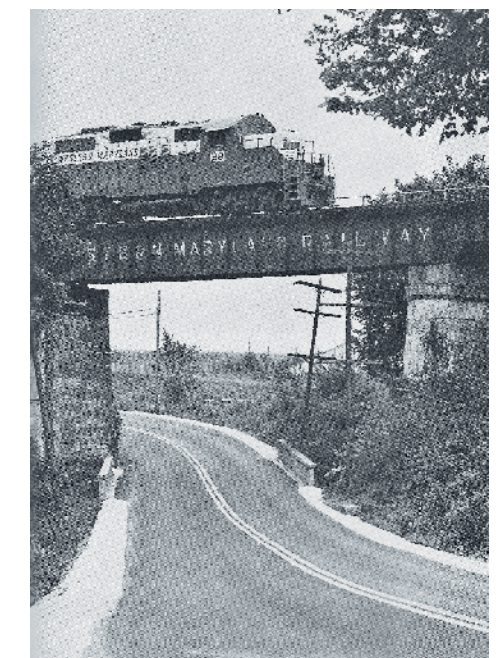
your feet, the smoke and vapor from the stack boiling up sky-high. After the train passed, you would go back to baseball, or Tarzan, or fighting the Japs at Iwo Jima. No need to say anything. But then the changes came. That familiar deep-throated steam whistle was replaced by the sound of air horns. Now you'd run to the grade crossing to get a look at some shiny new diesel; that was a thrill for a while. You saw fewer and fewer steam engines, then one day there would be none at all. It seemed, I don't know, inconceivable that you would never again hear or feel them, never smell them, never see them again.

—Excerpted from *Stations*



Left: *Medina* is a brooding pastiche of "Flanaganesque" skyline elements including a trestle, multiple factory smokestacks, a particularly dominant water tower, and the omnipresent telegraph poles.

Below: *Marveltown* (left) is an adaptation of a Roger Cook photograph (right) taken at Rocky Ridge, Maryland. The photograph appeared in Cook and Karl Zimmermann's book *The Western Maryland Railway: Fireballs and Black Diamonds*.



Like the ancient hedgerows of England, the railroad right-of-way has become a miniature linear environment, a pathway through the larger landscape as well as a landscape unto itself. Along one side runs a drainage ditch . . . cattails grow in the standing water, which may harbor not only frogs but large fish like bullheads and carp. Cardinal flowers and purple loosestrife climb its gravelly banks. The level roadbed, built to a slightly higher profile than the fields through which it passes, is flanked by a row of telephone poles. On a hot, still day the wires hum. The motionless air smells of metal and creosote. Polished rails shimmer, receding into the distance. The nine-inch space between cross ties is uncomfortable for walking. This is company property, yet it may as well be yours, or belong to no one . . . a domain without inhabitants, a zone beyond the usual accepted notions of bodily and moral safety . . .

Professor J. S. *The Zone*.
Shenandoah University Press, 1981.
"A contemporary study of the cultural, topographic and aesthetic aspects of railroad space." [Appotomac County Athenaeum]

This text block for one of the *Stations* paintings is an example of Flanagan's invented contextual documentation for his invented railroad landscape. It is cryptically attributed to *The Zone* by a "Professor J.S.," a sly reference to John Stilgoe, whose landmark book on the railroad landscape, *Metropolitan Corridor*, includes a chapter called "Zone."

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The first image in *Stations* is a Flanagan watercolor map of "Appotomac County," Virginia, the setting for the story and its invented railroads. Readers familiar with the geography and railroads of northern Virginia will enjoy deconstructing this map to discover Flanagan's blending of fantasy and reality. The rest of the almost four dozen images are based on photographs of real places, most taken by Flanagan, some by others, all of them altered by degrees.

Although the *Stations* paintings are railroad landscapes, many of them do not include trains. At one point in the *Stations* narrative, photographer Russell McKay's partner Anna throws his camera into a creek during an argument. After McKay returned to retake the shot, Anna said she helped him make a better picture. "More poetic," she said, "to leave out the train." Michael Flanagan said, "I've been interested or obsessed with trains and railroads ever since I was a child. Not so much with the hardware of railroads, but with the notion of railroads as routes. I like trains, but it's the tracks that come first."⁷

Of the forty-six images spread over the thirty-eight *Stations* paintings, only ten include trains, and only seven of those, locomotives. However, the paintings include bridges, tunnels, grade crossings, telephone poles, and a notable abundance of water towers. For the *Stations* series, Flanagan became consumed with exploring and documenting the railroad environment. He incorporated a wide range of little details in his paintings, giving them a heightened sense of apparent authenticity. Through the cumulative weight of so many specific observed details, typical and characteristic, or idiosyncratic and irrelevant, he created such an authentic world that one feels somehow they have seen these places before. According to the book's narrator, Lucius Caton, "Russell was earnest about wanting to document and record these scenes, and getting the facts right."

Subtexts and Characters

The *Stations* text includes additional material beyond Caton's narration of McKay's life, "subtexts" created to contextualize his imagined world. This includes texts from roadside historical markers, definitions from place name dictionaries, and stream-of-consciousness lists of associated words that read like surrealist "automatic poetry." Flanagan references a body of invented academic literature including architectural surveys, local histories, and academic journals. Students of landscape history will catch on to some of Flanagan's sly, masked references to major scholars of the field.

The most prominent reality-based *Stations* character is Russell McKay. Flanagan revealed that to him, McKay's narration is spoken in "Winston's [O. Winston Link's] voice and delivery, and my imagination."⁸ Link may be the "voice" of Russell McKay, but he is not the model for the actual character. Link appears in *Stations* as "another photographer," "Luther Lincoln," a professional who took dramatic nighttime flash photographs of steam locomotives in cooperation with the Norfolk & Western Railroad. A strong candidate for "The Real McKay" is photographer James P. Gallagher, who had the foresight to document fading 1950s steam operations on marginal railroads in Maryland, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia. Flanagan pays homage to Gallagher in the spectral painting, *Luray Run* (next spread), closely based on Gallagher's signature photograph of the Maryland & Pennsylvania Railroad at Gross Trestle near Sharon, Maryland.

Integrating the Caton/McKay narrative and other supporting text into *Stations* gave Flanagan another outlet to express his own thoughts and feelings, in a different but no less important way than the paintings. It let him get it all down on paper. Many of the fascinations, motivations, quotes, and stories Flanagan attributes to the narrator and protagonist had basis in his own life. Flanagan said, "The text became as important as the pictures. It helped



Index is based on a John Stilgoe photograph from the introductory page of the chapter "Crossing" in *Metropolitan Corridor*.

unlock this world, bring it to life. I want my paintings to be like detective stories. There are clues planted in the text and in the pictures that should inspire the viewer to hunt, to find the sources, to discover that this fictional place does have a real life correspondence, to compare how it departs from reality or how it is close to reality”⁹

Model Railroad’s Influence

Another important artistic and creative medium critical to the inspiration for *Stations* and for the physical development of its paintings is model railroading. Michael Flanagan wanted to build a model railroad every place he lived. He did not begin

to realize that dream until well after the *Stations* project. He originally conceived of the Buffalo & Shenandoah Railroad as a model railroad layout before he began the paintings, and the two motivations had an uneasy coexistence. Creating the entire fictional line in three dimensions was limited by physical constraints. When the two-dimensional medium won out, the geography became unlimited. Flanagan was able to expand and ultimately invent the adjoining Powhatan Railroad along with its corresponding paintings.

In *Stations*, Flanagan touches on modeling and its obsessive qualities in the text and particularly in the painting

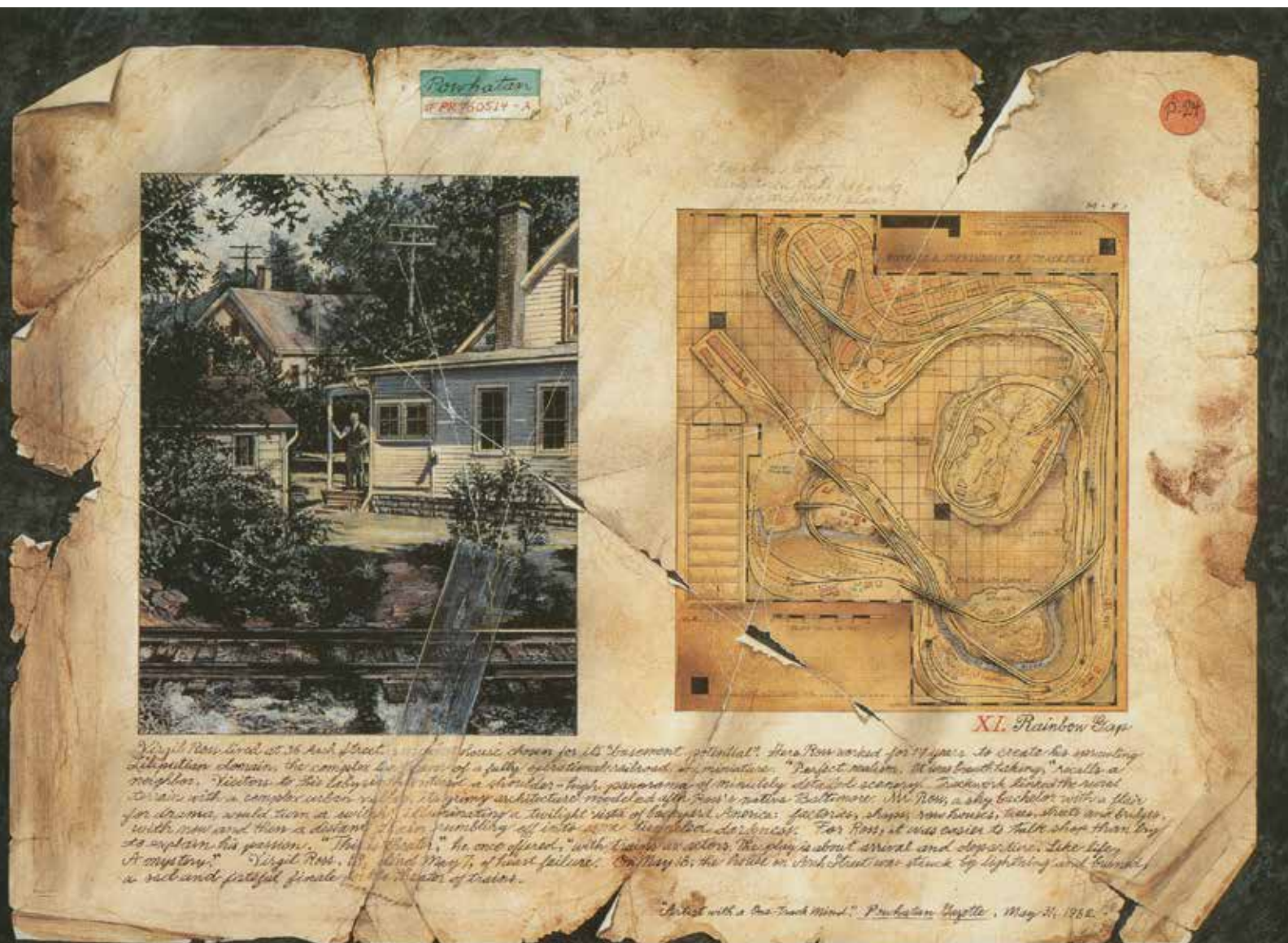
“Rainbow Gap,” which documents a visit to the model railroad layout of the renowned “Virgil Ross.” Ross is based on the real John Allen, whose HO scale layout of the “Gorre & Daphetid” line was a staple of model railroad magazines. Like the real Allen, Flanagan depicts Ross as a reclusive bachelor who died of a heart attack and whose layout was subsequently consumed by fire. Indeed, the track plan depicted in *Rainbow Gap* is a mirror image reversal of the real Gorre & Daphetid layout. In *Stations*, Lucuis Caton recalls how “Mr. Ross received us into his house and showed us down to the basement. The railroad spread out everywhere around us, but the scale was tiny. Lots of tunnels, of course. In one place he had made a little valley, and I realized it was an exact duplicate of the cut at Panther.. magical. It gave me a funny feeling. I never saw anything like it.”

Flanagan knew several accomplished railroad modelers and later in life he began building his own layout in his Connecticut studio. Flanagan’s process of carefully researching real places and structures for his paintings to insure authenticity is the same methodology scale model railroaders use and refer to as “prototyping.” Race car driver and railroad modeler Sam Posey, in his remarkable book about modeling, *Playing with Trains*, notes the modelers’ process of “making frequent field trips to photograph and measure real buildings along the main line” to create “products of the imagination, that look and feel exactly like real places.” Posey “wanted [his] locomotives and structures to be as authentic as possible, so that, by proxy, they would connect the

Above right: *Luray Run* is based on a well-known, oft-reproduced image by railroad photographer James P. Gallager of a Maryland & Pennsylvania Railroad train crossing the Gross Trestle near Sharon, Maryland.

Right: *Panther* is based on a Flanagan photograph of the less well known north portal of the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad’s Harpers Ferry tunnel at Sandy Hook, Maryland. Like several other *Stations* paintings, Flanagan reversed the original image 180 degrees.

Rainbow Gap accompanies a narrative account of a visit to the renowned model railroad layout of a “Virgil Ross,” based on the real John Allen and his “Gorre & Daphetid” model railroad layout.





White Stone Junction contains a riot of tiny details reflecting the visual clutter found in the railroad landscape that Flanagan appreciated and often multiplied to enhance the sense of authenticity in his *Stations* paintings.

viewer with an actual world.”¹⁰ According to one of the modelers quoted in *Playing with Trains*, “A layout can be art. Modeling is more than mere craft or skill. It is sculptural. It has composition. It evokes a mood. There’s an emotional response.”¹¹

Flanagan’s two-dimensional “stations” are not just painted, they are, to borrow another modeling term, “scratch built” from a library of experiences, books, magazines, and reference photographs. For Flanagan, building a layout and creating his own three-dimensional imaginary world was, like the *Stations* series, a reflective and personal experience. Based on a pastiche of northern Virginia towns, his layout included a “Riddleburger’s Store,” modeled on a real building where his father and grandfather once lived. Michael Flanagan’s track plan for his “Baltimore & Ohio Railroad, Shenandoah Subdivision” won third place in *Model Railroader* magazine’s 2009 track plan contest. Further blurring the lines between fantasy and reality, railroad modeler Fred Lagno modeled several scenes from *Stations* on his HO scale “Allegheny Central Railroad” layout, and subsequently published a sort of *Stations* “tribute” book, *Changes*, combining photographs of his layout with a nostalgic fictional narrative.¹²

Power, Obsession, and Loss

Michael Flanagan was gracefully forthcoming when interviewed about the multiple meanings of *Stations* and his railroad-themed work. Whether articulated by Flanagan in a book review or interview, or through the voices of his of Lucius Caton or Russell McKay, *Stations* is about the evocative power of railroad tracks, human obsession, and coping with loss.

Experiencing the railroad environment and landscape was clearly powerful for Flanagan, yet it was not so much about the trains themselves, but about the places where they were, or could potentially be. Encountering or lingering in these landscapes heightened anticipation. Flanagan said, “A railroad is a conduit, it links you to places you can’t see. For me that’s the

Stations is about the evocative power of railroad tracks, human obsession, and coping with loss.

ultimate: to stand by the tracks, waiting for a message from afar.”¹³ *Stations* is about how Flanagan felt when he was in what he called, through Russell McKay, the “outlaw landscape,” the places he traveled to find his trains, his photographs, and his creative inspiration. McKay said, “People think it must be depressing to hang around the railroad taking pictures of shabby old buildings. But it’s just the opposite. The work uplifts me.” *Stations* is also about human obsession with the past, with machinery, and arcane special interests. Flanagan said, “The book isn’t really about trains. What I’m interested in is the subject of obsession, whatever it would be. Something bites you at an early age, gets under your skin, and you can’t get rid of it.”¹⁴ As Lucius Caton observed of Russell McKay, “Passion breeds its own subculture... its own literature and terminology, a whole vocabulary of shared mania.”

Finally, *Stations* is clearly about dealing with loss. Flanagan was in mourning for the lost era of his childhood, and not just steam trains and all the vernacular details of the world they ran in. Flanagan said, “In a sense, my paintings are about travel, about the unconscious, the imagination and our ultimate paths in life. I’m interested in the past as it constantly asserts itself in my own memory, my own childhood. It hammers at me, it pulls at me, it’s very alive for me. Not in the sense of a weepy nostalgic yearning for the good old days, but in the sense of some unfathomable mystery.”¹⁵ Lucius Caton said about looking down railroad tracks, “It beckoned like a gateway to some other landscape...but we are always ‘here,’ never ‘there,’ what we have, what we inhabit, is a geography of longing.” And in Russell McKay’s words, “Some of us express longing through art.” *Stations* was Flanagan’s way of creatively externalizing, exploring, and addressing that longing by

recreating that lost world in a fantastic way, from reality and imagination, building a two-dimensional surrogate world, with its own reflective inhabitants and imaginary creative and intellectual “support group” who cared enough to photograph it, to write about it, and to honor it.

About 14,000 copies of *Stations* were sold of the 20,000 printed. Critical reception was largely positive. Most reviewers praised the paintings more than the narrative, while others appreciated Flanagan’s holistic intent. John Stilgoe called it, “One of the most compelling books of the last decade... the paintings recreate a world from the late 1940s and 1950s few contemporary Americans remember and even fewer know how to analyze.”¹⁶ The book won Flanagan several commissions, including steam locomotive paintings for O. Winston Link and the presidents of CSX and Norfolk Southern. Flanagan then moved on to larger paintings in a looser style, including the “Reader” series of self-portraits, some in industrial landscapes, with a single, evocative word placed across the surface.

Michael Flanagan died in Connecticut in August 2012 after an eight-year battle with colon cancer. Near the end of *Stations*, one of Flanagan’s fictional characters, a local historian named Oscar Caton, is interviewed about the ceremonial last passenger train run on the Powhatan Railroad. Caton’s words are a fitting distillation of Flanagan’s artistic intent for *Stations* as well as an epitaph. “I came to bid farewell to a piece of history, a familiar landscape, a whole way of life...”

Although *Stations* is just one artist’s attempt to address and express his feelings about the railroad landscape, it has potential to help all of us who are drawn to that environment understand and explore our feelings about it. *Stations* remains a hidden classic of railroad art and literature that deserves more attention and a spot on the shelf of any railroad art enthusiast or thoughtful railfan.

Credits and Endnotes

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The author would like to acknowledge and thank Karl Zimmermann, whose June 1995 *Trains* magazine article, "Trains of Imagination," provided a particularly insightful review of *Stations*.

The author encourages readers curious or enthusiastic about *Stations* to contact him at matthew.a.kierstead@gmail.com.

1. Matt Kierstead interview with Christopher Sweet, March 2013
2. Stilgoe, John. "Michael Flanagan's Stations." *American Art*, Vol.11, No.2, Summer 1997, p.45.
3. Michael Flanagan as quoted by Michael Harvey in "Riding the Rails with Michael

Flanagan," *Connecticut Business News Journal*, February 1, 2008.

4. Michael Flanagan as quoted by Jerry Tallmer, "Michael Flanagan," *New York Post Weekend*, "Eye on Art," March 8, 1991, p. 47.
5. Michael Flanagan as quoted by Jerry Tallmer in "Remembrance of Trains Passed," *The Observatory*, December 26, 1994-January 2, 1995, p. 19.
6. "Famous," unpublished 1999 Michael Flanagan essay, estate of Michael Flanagan.
7. Michael Flanagan as quoted by Trinkett Clark in *Parameters*, a catalog printed in conjunction with a one-man show of Michael Flanagan's railroad paintings at the Chrysler Museum, Norfolk, Virginia, October 18, 1992, to January 3, 1993.
8. Michael Flanagan as quoted by Jerry Tallmer in "Michael Flanagan," *New York Post Weekend*, "Eye on Art," March 8, 1991, p. 47.
9. Michael Flanagan as quoted by Trinkett Clark in *Parameters*, a catalog printed

in conjunction with a one-man show of Michael Flanagan's railroad paintings at the Chrysler Museum, Norfolk, Virginia, October 18, 1992, to January 3, 1993.

10. Posey, Sam. *Playing with Trains*. New York: Random House, 2004, p. 103.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 150.
12. Lagno, Fred. *Changes: A Model Railroad Comes to Life*. Signature Books, 2011.
13. Michael Flanagan as quoted in "The Imaginary Railroad," *The New York Times Magazine*, Sept. 25, 1994, p. 50.
14. Michael Flanagan as quoted by Jerry Tallmer in "Remembrance of Trains Passed," *The Observatory*, December 26, 1994, to January 2, 1995, p. 19.
15. Michael Flanagan as quoted by Trinkett Clark in *Parameters*, a catalog printed in conjunction with a one-man show of Michael Flanagan's railroad paintings at the Chrysler Museum, Norfolk, Virginia, October 18, 1992, to January 3, 1993.
16. Stilgoe, John. "Michael Flanagan's Stations." *American Art*, Vol.11, No.2, Summer 1997, p.45.

Blueville, based on a photograph Flanagan took in his childhood home in Perrysburg, Ohio, embodies the compelling draw Flanagan felt when looking down railroad tracks. As expressed by his character Russell McKay, "It beckoned like a gateway to some other landscape...but we are always 'here,' never 'there,' what we have, what we inhabit, is a geography of longing."

