

From Bill Semenuk: TO BUILD A RAILROAD

In 1890 when the Chesapeake and Columbia Investment Co. was crafting its first newspaper advertisements for the AOTB beach community, a crucial part of the sales pitch was how to get to the property that C&C was trying to sell. With only horse-drawn carriages, railroads, and ferries, the developer's challenge was to build a railroad or run a steamship to their new development, much as today's developers pave roads connecting to the main highway.

Proximity of the Bay Ridge resort made that task possible. In 1890 Bay Ridge was a major rail and steamship destination, especially during the summer, for Washington, Baltimore, Wilmington, and even Ocean City. Ferries connected Baltimore with Bay points by daily service, including "businessman specials" departing in the morning and returning in the evening.

The Chesapeake & Columbia Street Railway, also known as the AOTB RR or the Bay Ridge Short Line, was built by the developer in 1891 to allow residents to travel from downtown Washington and Baltimore to the new Arundel on the Bay community via Bay Ridge. The final three-mile leg, known as the C&C, allowed those residents to travel to Arundel on the Bay.

The straight line from Bay Ridge's Tolly Point was a few miles over water; the safest land route would be a few hundred yards inland. To avoid having to build several hundred feet of trestle bridge across Oyster and Black Walnut Creeks, the selected route followed the shore line all the way down to AOTB's hotel at Linden &



While this 1904 U.S. Geological Survey map does not show the C&C railroad, it does show the "plank road" along the shore from the end of the AOTB boardwalk to Bay Ridge, connecting there at what is now Wayman Avenue. This road ran parallel to and inland of the railroad within the 80-foot right of way purchased from the Brashears family who owned the farm between the two beach communities. [That farm was subsequently sold to a syndicate headed by the Frederick Douglass family to create Highland Beach. Along the road, and westward on Magnolia, the map bears dots indicating properties of the AOTB settlement of 108 years ago.]