

The B&O Lost Division's Mountain Branch

August 2010

The Mountain Branch began when the B&O Lost Division purchased a short industrial switching line at Van Doren WV. from the Shunk Railroad in the mid 1980's. It crossed and connected to the B&O Lost Division main line and served the industrial town of Jonesville, WV. Although the crossing was removed shortly after the purchase, the Shunk Railroad still interchanges with the B&O at Van Doren.

Still in the buying mood, the B&O approached the Monroe Railway, about purchasing its line from Smith, WV. to the Erie Interchange at Megantown. The Monroe Railway is a backwoods line, located across the valley. It brought coal and timber out to the Erie Railroad at Megantown. The offer was well timed, and Monroe Railway jumped at the chance to connect with the B&O. Plans began to connect the tracks at Smith to the track at Jonesville via a long bridge across the valley, and over the B&O main line. By October 12th, 1997 the golden spike ceremony was held just outside of Smith and the Mountain Branch of the B&O was officially in business.

At first, the Mountain Branch was served by trains out of Van Doren, but as traffic levels picked up, it's small yard, which was land locked in the river valley, became a bottleneck. As the yard could not be expanded, the decision was made to run all Mountain Branch trains out of Grafton yard. This, and a major track relocation project, eliminated much of the congestion at Van Doren.

Deatrick Industries, the Van Doren Power House, the Van Doren Grain Elevator, Shunk Railroad interchange, the

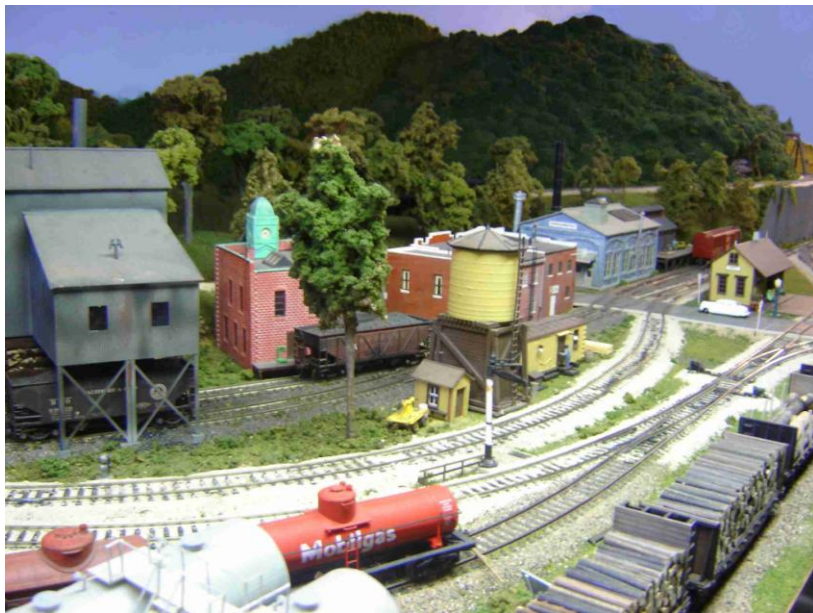
B&O Freight House and another small warehouse are located in Van Doren and serviced by the B&O.



At Jonesville, the major customer is the National Amalgamated Canning Company along with the Jonesville Grain Elevator. The NAC receives refrigerated produce, steel coils and a tank car of oil for its boiler house. Canned goods are shipped out daily to all points of the country. This town had been the end of the line when owned by the Shunk Railroad. After B&O bought it, they bridged the valley and ran the branch up to Smith, WV., connecting to the Monroe Railway.



Smith, WV. had not been much more than a switchback on the Monroe Railway. Just a tiny coal town hidden in the hills. But as rail traffic began to flow to the B&O from the Monroe Railway and the TRH Mine, soon Smith began to grow rapidly. A passing siding was installed and a station was built to serve the town. When paved roads reached town of Smith, the rest of the world discovered the secret of the good trout fishing streams in the area. Fishermen come from all over to catch a prize winning trout from the streams around Smith. They all leave with a story about the big one they caught, or about the one that got away. The railroad crosses the big stream twice on its way up to Megantown. Within the year, the Lyndon Casting Company was built, along with a tie plant, The Byam Oil Company and team track were built for the general public to use for shipping and receiving goods.



Megantown, WV is at the end of the B&O Mountain Branch and generates a large amount of coal traffic. The RLW Mine is the largest coal mine on the Mountain Branch, loading out 6 hopper cars of coal a day. Several years after the B&O came to town, the railroad build a truck dump at the other end of town to assist several local mines in marketing their coal to the waiting customers of the world. The truck dump has been well received, generating up to 4 hopper cars of coal per day. The Witteborg Wonder Work

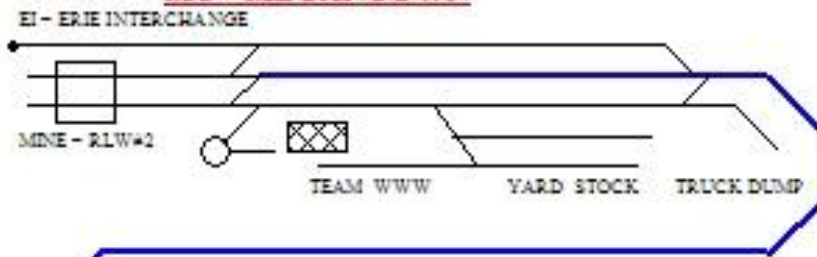


ships its products on the B&O daily. Not sure what it is they produce, but the WWW might be a clue. And Megantown has a small stockyard that occasionally ships and receives live stock. As the town is at the end of the line, a small turntable is still in service there. Once necessary for the Monroe Railway steam engines, its use in the diesel era is just to shuffle an occasional engine onto the layover track. The old interchange with the Erie Railroad does not see the volume of traffic it used to, as most loads coming off the Mountain go down to the B&O now. But it still sees enough interchange traffic for a daily train and a local.

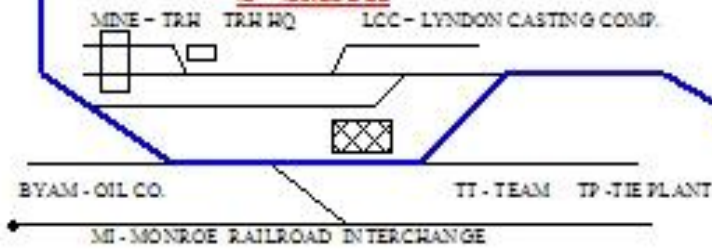
Last year a survey crew was in the Megantown area looking to run tracks further up the mountain to open more of the coal reserves. Speculation ran hot for a while, but with the current economic conditions, it did not make good financial sense. So for the time being, Megantown remains the end of the line for B&O Lost Division's Mountain Branch.

A diagram of the layout is included on the next page. The layout is DC and block controls, with AristoCraft radio throttles for the way freights and a local throttle at the towns. Track is code 100 nickel silver with #6 switches and 22" radius. Car cards are used for operating sessions. Most switches are manually thrown, except at Van Doren Junction where the switch machines are used to route power through junction. Scenery is complete and many detailed scenes placed around the layout. (I like the campers at Van Doren myself as it reminds me of rail fanning with my friends.) On the Mountain Branch, 6 car trains are the limit due to grades and siding lengths, but between Grafton Yard and Van Doren train length can be up to 10 cars. The territory is dark, all trains are extras, and cabooses are mandatory!

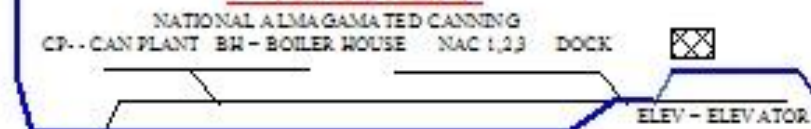
MI - MEGANTOWN



S - SMITH



J - JONESVILLE



VD - VAN DOREN

