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The Sentinel

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- High Noon on the B&O's West End: *February 9, 1956*
- Getting Freight through Chicago, Part 3: *Wrapping up the Day*

Message from the President

HAPPY FALL SEASON TO ALL.

Another year is coming to a close and COVID-19 still is giving us challenges in some regions of the country. Yet, the B&ORHS continues to progress with its functions as a nonprofit educational organization. We managed to keep the *Sentinel* and Calendar on schedule, work by the volunteers at the archives continues, and some activities are returning to what they were in 2018. The Western Mini-Con was virtual this year, but next year it will be in-person only. The Eastern Mini-Con was a hybrid event with in-person attendance and virtual, but next year it will be in-person only. Why only in person you ask? Our intention is to get regional members to meet each other and share experiences about modeling and working on the railroad. I enjoy seeing the faces of members and sharing the accomplishments of the society with every member of the society. By the time you read this, we will have completed the annual convention in Akron; I hope you were able to attend. Special arrangements were made to prevent COVID spreading on the tour, and I hope this will not be necessary in 2022.

The society has several book projects in development and we will need authors for each. Here is the list of current and future projects:

<i>B&O Dining Car Book</i>	Joe Nevin	Nearing Completion
<i>B&O Headend Equipment</i>	Greg Smith	In Development
<i>B&O Sleepers</i>	Joe Nevin	Starting after Dining Car Book
<i>B&O Coaches</i>	Author Needed	Pending
<i>St. Louis Division Book</i>	Nick Fry	In Development and Drafts being Completed
<i>A Guide to Historical Modeling B&O Locomotives 1900-1987</i>	Greg Smith	Out for Sale by Company Store, Just Released
<i>B&O's Pittsburgh Division</i>	Author Needed	Late 2023 - Early 2024 Release
<i>B&O in the Cumberland Area</i>	Author Needed	Late 2025 - Early 2026 Release
<i>Last 20 Years of the B&O in Baltimore</i>	Dale Corn + Others	Firm Release Date in Early 2027
<i>B&O's Akron Division</i>	Author Needed	Late 2028 Release
<i>B&O's Chicago Division</i>	Author Needed	Late 2030

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On the Covers

FRONT COVER: A Northbound C&O train on the Chicago & Western Indiana, led by B&O GP-38 3849 is about to cross the B&OCT main tracks at State Line Tower, Hammond Indiana, in about 1972. (Photograph by Thomas A. White)

BACK COVER: A B&OCT main line hostler is at Western Avenue Junction on the way Inbound to Lincoln Street Roundhouse with B&OCT engine 8418, a 600 HP SW-1 and B&O Eng 3500, a GP 35. The SW-1s were too small for most B&OCT work. By 1972, all but 8418 were traded to B&O for larger switch engines. 8418 was usually assigned to Harvey or Cicero, for assignments consistent with its size. (Photograph by Thomas A. White)

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High Noon on the B&O's West End: *February 9, 1956*

By Glenn Fisher

GN Tower,
East Grafton, West Virginia, 1984.
(Roberta Poling photograph,
B&O Railroad Historical Society Archives)

I was introduced to the West End of the Cumberland Division by Frank Shaffer in his excellent articles in *Trains* and *Model Railroader* in the early 1960s. M&K Junction, with its tower, helpers, coal trains, streamliners, steep grades, and difficult operating conditions fascinated me. My interest was enhanced by Charles Roberts, first by his book *West End* (1991) and then by mail in 1992, culminating in him giving me a copy of the train sheet used in this article. Then in 2015 I met Mel Fisher (no relation), who worked at MK tower from late 1956 to 1959. Much of the detail about the tower comes from him.

Using the 6¼ feet X 1¾ feet train sheet for February 9, 1956 (containing 80 movements, 34 eastbound and 46 westbound, not counting work trains and helpers), I will freeze the railroad at noon and locate all the crews/trains on duty on the West End at that time. Note that, unlike many other railroads, the B&O did not hesitate to use 12:00 to indicate both noon and midnight.

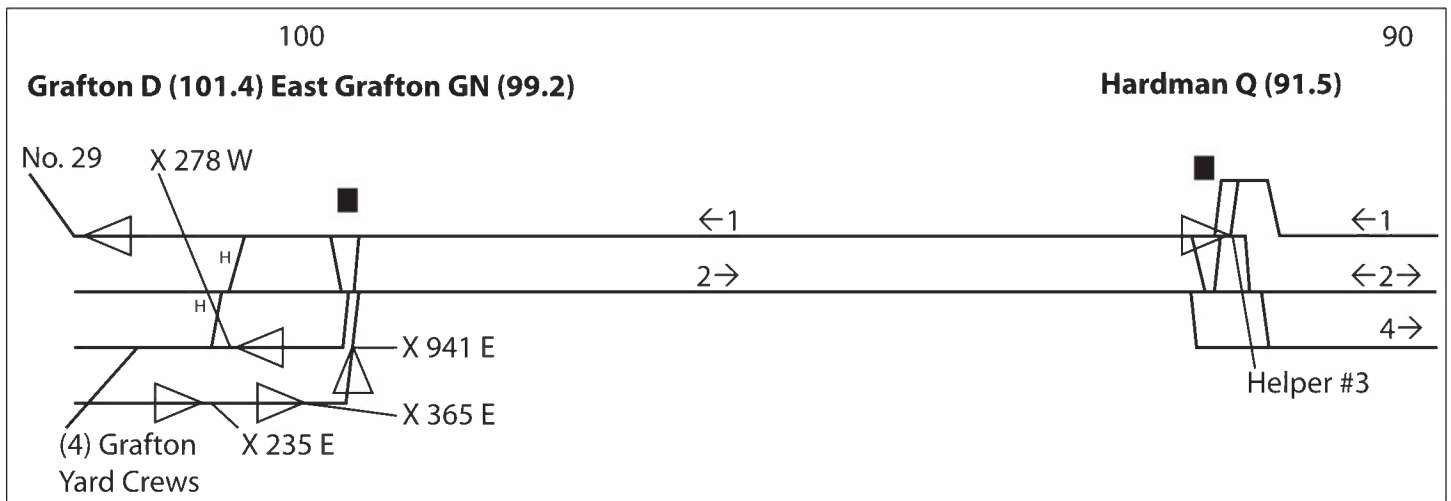
The accompanying maps show the location of all trains/crews at noon. All of the switches shown are interlocked and controlled from a tower, except spring (S) and hand-thrown (H) switches. Since the train sheet shows only the times of trains at reporting stations (all interlocking towers with the exception of Keyser station) I locate the trains at noon by extrapolating the difference between reporting times. This may mean that my placement will not be exactly correct. There are also a few errors and omissions on the train sheet that Roberts copied for me. On the West End they called the loaded coal trains “drags” and the empty hopper trains “coal trains.” I will do the same. (MP) refers to mileage from Cumberland.

The West End Subdivision of the Cumberland Division stretches 99.2 miles from East Grafton West Virginia east to Cumberland Maryland. Two other subdivisions branch off it: the 6.2 mile Patterson Creek from McKenzie to Patterson Creek and the 47.9 mile M&K to Morgantown. Each day 10 passenger trains, 10 time freights, and 35-40 coal trains/drag must climb and descend two mountains on their way over the West End. Add to this over 70 light helper moves and a few other trains, and you have one busy subdivision, which also operates in the worst cold and snow east of the Rockies.

Double track with Automatic Block Signaling (277 Color Position Light signals installed in 1930) guide trains on the main line and Patterson Creek subdivision. Single track with timetable and train order is the order of the day on the M&K sub. There are six sections of triple track:

	Miles	Middle Track Signaled For
Hardman to Blaser	10.9	Both directions
MK Tower to Rinard	12.9	Both directions
Mountain Lake Park to Deer Park	3.4	Eastward direction
Wilson to Strecker	5.2	Westward direction
Bond to Big Curve	1.5	Both directions
Kelly's Curve to West Keyser	3.9	Westward to Piedmont, Eastward beyond

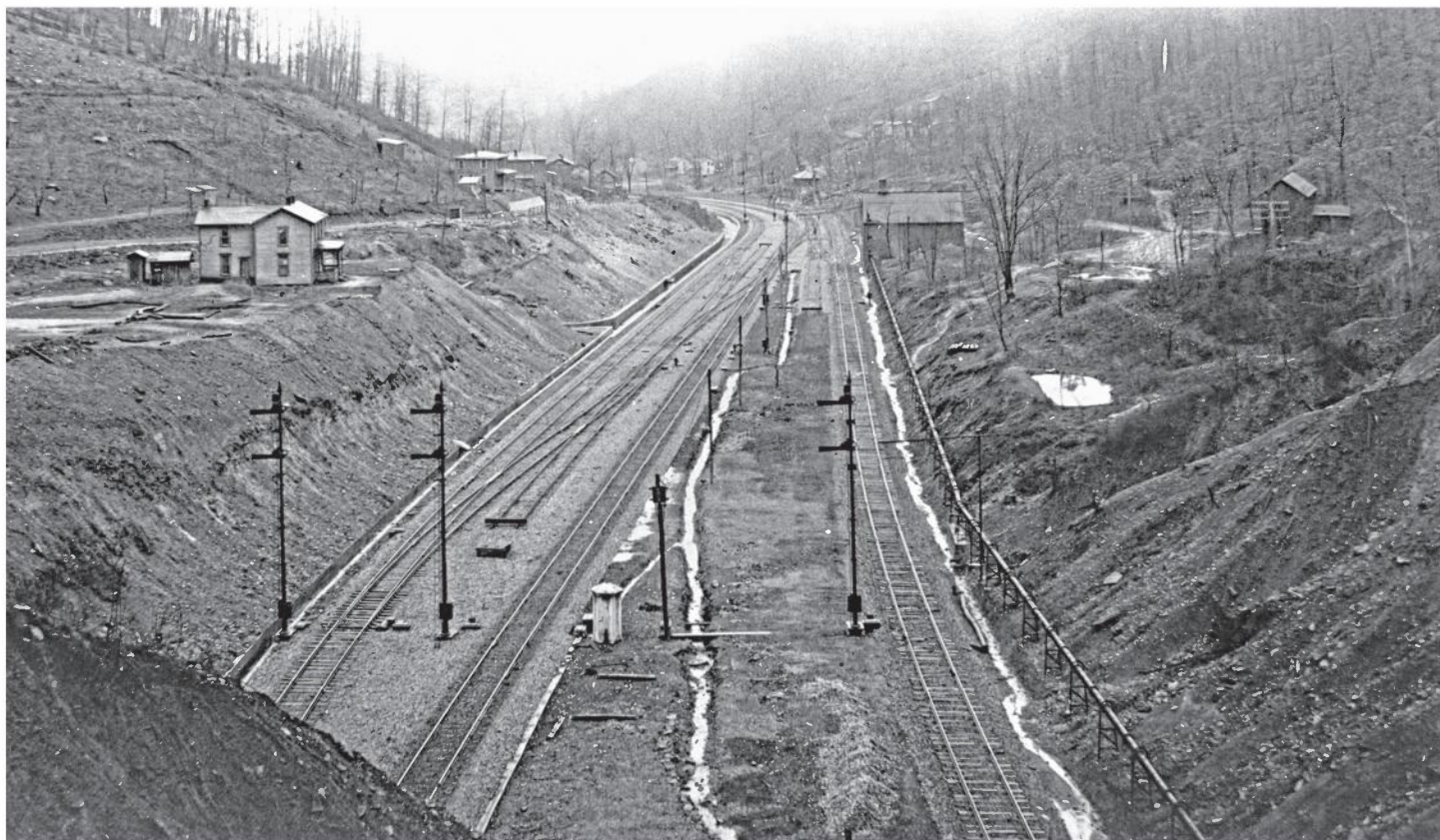
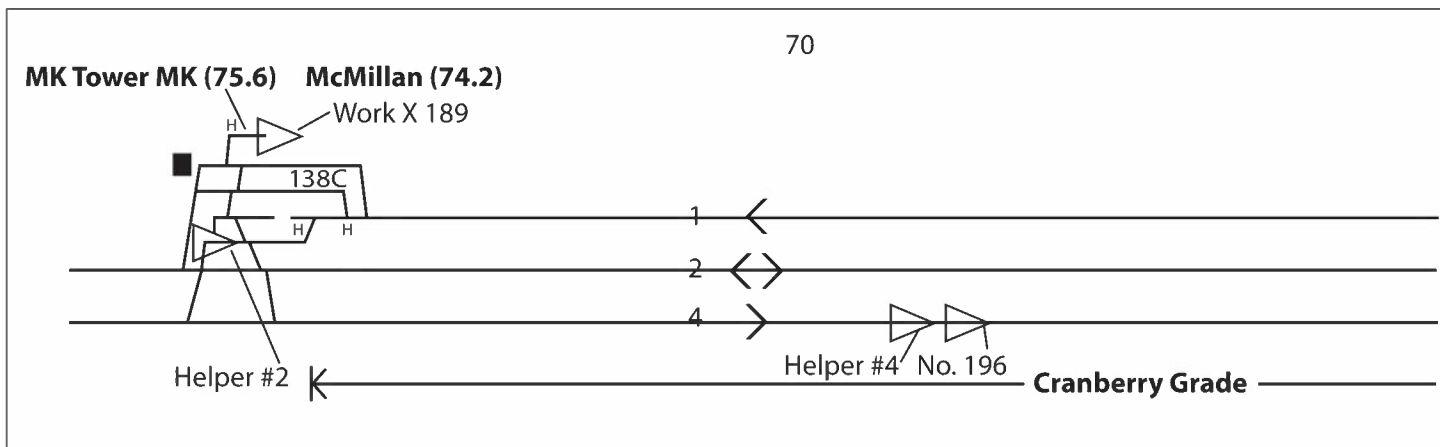
Four tracks exist for 0.9 miles between Altamont and Wilson, two tracks signaled in each direction



West End (WS) Tower just west of Kingwood Tunnel, West End, West Virginia. (Gary Schlerf photograph, B&O Railroad Historical Society Archives)

The dispatcher in Cumberland has 15 around-the-clock operators in 14 interlocking towers to assist in directing trains:

- East Grafton (GN)
- Hardman (Q) (controls Newburg)
- West End (WS)
- Blaser (K)
- M&K Junction (MK) (controls east end of westward passing siding at McMillan)
- Terra Alta (CA) (controls east end of westward passing siding and east end of track 2, both at Rinard)
- Mountain Lake Park (PK) (controls east end of track 4 and west end of westward passing siding, both at Deer Park)
- Altamont (AM) (controls east end of track 4 at Wilson)
- Strecker (HM)
- Bond (BD) (controls Big Curve)
- Piedmont (P) (controls west end of track 3, west of Piedmont)
- West Keyser (Z)
- Keyser (operator in station)
- McKenzie (CO)
- Viaduct Junction (ND)



West end of Kingwood Tunnel cut, West End, West Virginia, circa 1912. WS Tower can be seen in the distance.

(B&O Railroad Historical Society Archives)

Even though Grafton is not technically on the West End, we start there in our survey of trains and locations as they were at noon on February 9, 1956 and work east. For a day in early February, the temperature in Maryland and West Virginia is unusually mild with 2:00pm readings ranging from 44F in Terra Alta to 66F in Hardman! This is not in keeping with Shaffer's summary of the area's seasons as July, August, and Winter.

No. 29

Sitting on track 1 in the Grafton passenger station is this mail and express, which just arrived at 11:45am, 20 minutes early. While the Grafton traffic is being unloaded, the engines (285-951X-285X) have pulled away and a passenger yard crew is spotting a baggage car with sealed mail from Washington on the Hill Track. At the same time another one of the switching crews from

Grafton is removing two deadhead cabooses from Keyser and placing them on the West End Cab Track. When No. 29 leaves town at the scheduled 12:15pm with a new crew, it will have the following consist:

Storage Mail (<i>sealed</i>)	Washington-Clarksburg
Newspapers	Philadelphia-Clarksburg
Express (<i>sealed</i>)	Philadelphia-Cincinnati
Express (<i>sealed</i>)	Jersey City-Cincinnati
Baggage (<i>Express with messenger</i>)	Jersey City-Cincinnati
Express (<i>sealed</i>)	Jersey City-Louisville
Express (<i>sealed</i>)	Jersey City-St. Louis
Express (<i>sealed</i>)	Washington-Cincinnati
Storage Mail (<i>sealed</i>)	Washington-St. Louis
Express (<i>sealed</i>)	Baltimore-St. Louis
Rider Coach	Cumberland-Cincinnati