

THE GANDY DANCER

WEST VIRGINIA RAILROAD MUSEUM, INC.

Repair Work Continues on B&O Caboose

By Janis Bland

The Museum continues to assess repairs and work on the B&O caboose C-3014, with the tentative plan of ultimately using it for excursion service as a possible fundraising vehicle.

Since the last issue of *The Gandy Dancer*, the Museum has had two "work days" open to Museum members, and apart from those days, Board member Jack Sanford has put in a number of additional hours on the caboose. His first order of business was to assess the condition of the roof and begin repairs there. When the weather improves, the roof will receive a second coat of paint. Additional immediate considerations are options for providing electrical power to the caboose and repairing the rotted floor boards.

Museum Board members Jack Sanford, Janis Bland, Bill Van Der Meer, Museum Member David Pineda, and AmeriCorps intern Ian Gray brainstormed ideas for cosmetic work of the caboose interior.

There is currently no timeline as to when work will be completed. While winter is somewhat of an obstacle to progress, lack of volunteers is certainly an issue. The Museum Board has offered a complimentary one-year membership in exchange for help on the caboose.

The following restrictions apply:

- Must be 21 or older
- Must dress appropriately for inclement weather and a shop environment (e.g. work boots, safety glasses, gloves, ear protection, etc.)
- Must sign a liability waiver releasing the West Virginia Railroad Museum, the Durbin and Greenbrier Valley Railroad, and the West Virginia State Rail Authority are not responsible for any injury that may occur to the volunteer
- If you decide to renew at the end of your year, you'll pay the normal \$30 membership fee.

Please consider volunteering your time and talent, and passing this information along. Stay tuned for future work days!



B&O Caboose C-3014

Photo at www.wvrailmuseum.com



Museum Board Member Bill Van Der Meer inspects the caboose's floorboards.

Photo by Janis Bland

Trekking for Tunnels on the Coal & Coke Railway

By Janis Bland

When my husband David and I moved to Upshur County, West Virginia, in 2005, I was unaware of the truly rich railroading history this county possesses. Gradually, though, my childhood interest bloomed anew thanks to David and me taking some excursions on the Durbin & Greenbrier Valley Railroad and Cass Railroad. I began collecting books on railroading, specifically books about railroading in West Virginia - including the fine volumes by Alan R. Clarke. At some point - I don't remember how - my interest was piqued by rumor of abandoned tunnels. Perhaps David mentioned something about taking an ATV through a tunnel. I subsequently learned these tunnels were on the old Coal & Coke Railway (C&CRR), and set my sights on Mr. Clarke's book of that railroad. That turned out to be one of the most difficult books to get - without selling a kidney! There are a few historical photos of tunnel construction in his book, and an appendix lists the tunnels with dimensions. But much to my frustration, there are woefully few-to-no photos of the abandoned tunnels as they are today. That was a research challenge I could not allow to go unanswered.

A relative's spouse proclaimed he knew the location of (some) tunnels and he would take me on an ATV. As that never materialized, I started with Google Earth. Fortunately, the satellite made its pass over Randolph and Upshur Counties during winter, and as a result, the C&CRR rail bed is easy to discern for the most part, and zooming in, the tunnels as well (some are easier to identify than others). Last November, I caught the low-hanging fruit of the Shipman Tunnel, very near our home, along the road. Sand Run (Groves) is similarly accessible. Others are a challenge: Reed's Gap (Goodwin) and Sago; the west end of Orr.



Google Earth rendering showing the Kingsville and Orr Tunnels, and the clearly visible rail bed. Zooming in on the actual Google Earth image will hint at the brick facade of the Kingsville Tunnel's west portal.

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Trekking for Tunnels on the Coal & Coke Railway

The abandoned tunnels of the C&CRR from the former Roaring Gap through Randolph and Upshur are as follows: Kingsville (Tunnel #1), Orr (Tunnel #2), Sand Run (formerly Groves, Tunnel #3), Shipman (Tunnel #4), Reed's Gap (Goodwin, Tunnel #5), and Sago (Tunnel #6). Abbott (Tunnel #7), Jones (Phillips, Tunnel #8), Frenchton (Tunnel #9), and Jacksonville (Tunnel #10, in Lewis County near Walkersville) are all active, in use by CSX. The last two tunnels, Delta (Tunnel #11) and Little Otter (Tunnel #12) are abandoned in Braxton County; I may attempt to locate these at a later date.

One note for aspiring tunnel hunters: do so at your own risk! If possible, ask permission from whomever you believe whose property you may cross. Don't go alone. I have explored alone, tramping around on a rail bed and in the brush during deer hunting season, and NOT wearing blaze orange. There may be no cell service, and rail beds and tunnels may be tricky, and the tunnels may themselves be unsafe. I've been asked, "Aren't you afraid of snakes or bears?" My reply is always, "I'm afraid of stumbling onto a meth lab." This past spring, I was following Upshur Co. route 16/11, Wamsley Road, which is the actual C&CRR rail bed. I stopped at the end of the road, and backed into where the rail bed obviously continued into the woods. I was looking at my phone maps when I was suddenly surrounded by a pickup on one side and a car on the other, loaded to the gills with locals eyeing me suspiciously. "You going mushroom hunting?" (It was morel season, of course.) "Um, no ... but can you tell me where any tunnels are?" I thrust my phone at him, and they all relaxed. He gestured toward where the Shipman Tunnel is (which I already knew), and satisfied that I wasn't going to encroach on their prized mushroom hunting grounds, they departed - as did I! (Honestly, I think it might be more dangerous to stumble onto someone's mushroom patch than a meth lab! I don't want to test that theory, though.)

That long caveat aside, let me share my trek to the Kingsville and Orr Tunnels. These tunnels are easy to locate, and clear with Google Earth. We drove US33 toward Elkins, and turned onto Kingsville Road, opposite Talbot Road. After a mile or so, we turned right onto Kingsville Station Road. This is a well-maintained gravel road that descends, then ascends to the rail bed, after which it becomes Ball Road (and not so maintained). At the juncture of the gravel road and the rail bed, the Kingsville Tunnel is to the left, Orr to the right, each about 3/10s mile either way. David and I donned our muck boots (I recommend waterproof, knee high boots because tunnels are often flooded both within, and on either side) and hiked toward the Kingsville Tunnel. It was a quick hike, level, and only moderately muddy until we were within 30 yards from the tunnel.



West portal of the Kingsville Tunnel, with 1924 brick facade.

Photo by Janis Bland

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Trekking for Tunnels on the Coal & Coke Railway

The tunnel itself was quite flooded. As David and I admired the fine brickwork that the B&O Railroad had erected in 1924, we heard an ATV, and saw headlights at the far end. Eventually the folks arrived by us, and I explained my project to photograph the tunnels. The gentleman offered to drive me back through the tunnel to get photos, to which his companion readily agreed. Now, I have to say the well-padded easy chair bolted to the 300cc ATV was quite comfortable! As we made our way back through the tunnel, I told him a bit about it, pointing out the man traps and architecture. The structure of Kingsville Tunnel seems solid; the uneven floor of the tunnel appears to be from water erosion from the grade and not debris from the tunnel ceiling. After we parted ways, and David and I were walking back toward our vehicle and the Orr Tunnel, a pickup came past us from the direction of the Kingsville Tunnel and continued up Ball Road. Obviously, the rail bed is used quite a bit.



*East portal of the Kingsville Tunnel.
Photo by Janis Bland*

As stated in Mr. Clarke's book, Kingsville Tunnel is 834 feet long, of medium sandstone, shale and four-foot coal seam, with 1907 sandstone facades (surviving on the east end, the west end having the elegant 1924 facade added by the B&O); sandstone walls and partial brick arch.



*Interior of the Kingsville Tunnel looking west.
Photo sanitized due to questionable graffiti.
Photo by Janis Bland*



*Builders' Plaque at the east portal of Kingsville Tunnel. Photo by Janis Bland
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SAVE THE DATE!
The Museum's Annual Meeting is
April 22, 2017.
Look for details in the April edition of The
Gandy Dancer!



***Polar Express Raffle Winners
 Announced***

On December 18 the drawing was held for the Polar Express train layout. The winner was John Williams from Fairmont, WV. The 2nd prize, a two-night stay in a deluxe suite at the Iron Road Inn in Elkins was won by Glen Johnson of Marriottsville, MD. The 3rd prize, a signed Larry Fisher depot print, was won by Bill Van der Meer of Elkins, WV. Many thanks to everyone who participated in our fundraising event.

Left to right are Board Member, Ed Griesel, O-gauge Polar Express layout winner John Williams of Mannington, WV and Board Member, Bill Van der Meer.

***Elkins Sewing Center Presents Quilt to
 Museum***

On November 15, 2016 Kathryn Prentice and Sue Pifer presented this quilt to the West Virginia Railroad Museum. Ms. Prentice is the quilter and Sue Pifer is the owner of Elkins Sewing Center. The quilt was made in honor of the observance of West Virginia's sesquicentennial. The quilt was pieced and then quilted on a quilting machine. We have received the permission from the ladies to use the quilt in any manner we wish. For now we will be displaying their gift in the museum and maybe someday it may be one of the subjects of one of our fundraisers. It is truly nice that we were thought of as the recipient of this hand-made treasure.



L-R: WVRRM President Jim Schnoover, Kathryn Prentice, and Sue Pifer

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The rail bed west toward the east portal of the Orr Tunnel is in very good shape; I could have driven my Rav4 within maybe 150 feet of the tunnel, at which point a tree had fallen across the rail bed. Past the fallen tree, muck boots are necessary. Even still, without a walking stick, I couldn't get close enough to the tunnel entrance to determine if it is open. On the east side, the tunnel is supported by framing timbers that appear sound. According to Mr. Clarke's book, one end of the Orr Tunnel may have a brick facade, which, based upon Kingsville and Sand Run, should be the west end. Against better judgment, that is, alone, I tried to find the west side of the Orr Tunnel. Since I didn't want to fall down an embankment and risk losing cell service or my phone, I will defer photos of the west end until I have companions to accompany me on the precarious descent. However, I suspect the Orr Tunnel isn't as elaborate as Kingsville, given the east end portal with timbers. Mr. Clarke's book gives its particulars as 768 feet, medium sandstone, 1907 brick facade and short length brick lining.

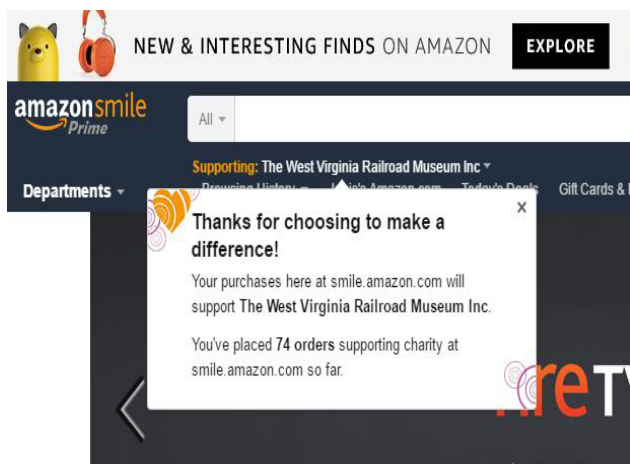
Next issue, I'll detail my findings and photos on the Sand Run (Groves) and Shipman Tunnels.



*Orr Tunnel, east portal with framing timbers still in place.
Photo by Janis Bland*



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Edmund Fox - Silver Spring, MD
Mary Goodwin - Buckhannon, WV
Michael Kulczak - Frederick, MD
Jim LaConte - Wayne, NJ
Robert Laine - Manassas, VA
Alden McBee - Wheeling, WV
Duane Miller - Glasgow, PA
Charles Sumrell - Derwood, MD
Julia Anne Varner - Elkins, WV
James Watson - Morgantown, WV

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New Members 2nd Quarter 2016

Hugh Hitchcock - Elkins, WV
Velma Vest - Sumter, SC
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