

3 First Decade, 1964-1973

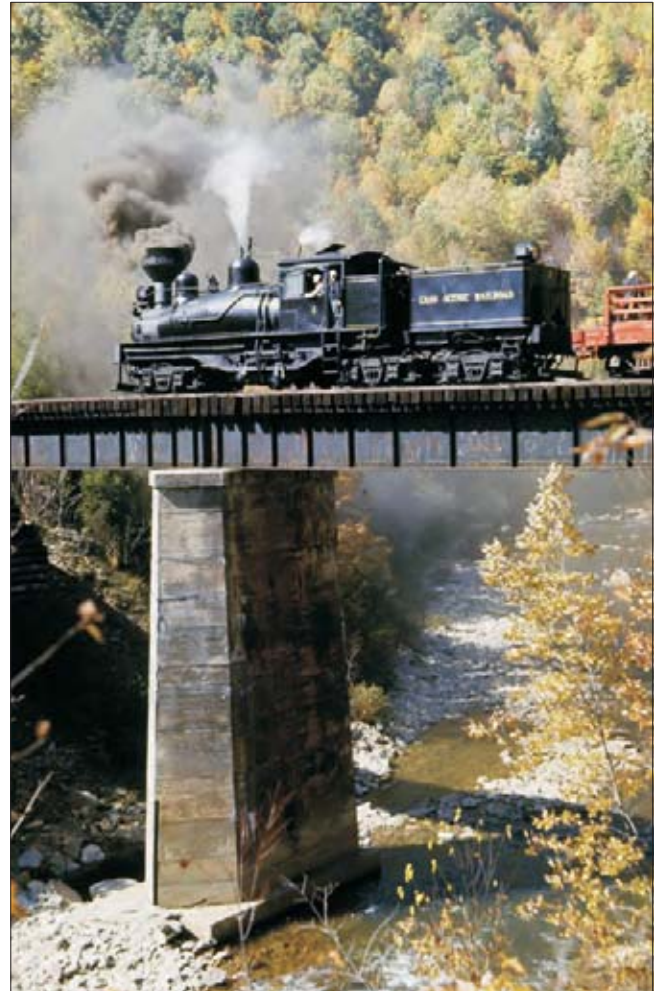
New Locomotives and Big Setbacks

The first major offline run occurred in October, 1964 when Shay 4 powered a trip to the Mountain State Forest Festival in Elkins. The train traveled over the C&O from Cass to Durbin and the Western Maryland from Durbin to Elkins. See Chapter 9 for a further look at offline trip operations.

In December, 1964, Shay 7 was purchased from the Meadow River Lumber Company in Rainelle, and ran to Cass via the Nicholas, Fayette & Greenbrier and the C&O Railroads under its own power.

1965 saw the start of the annual Railfan Weekend tradition. As discussed in Chapter 8, this event was designed specifically for those interested in railroad action photography. 1966 saw the rebuilt Shay 5, which had been laid up with cracked cylinders since 1959, rejoin the active roster. In December, the roster was expanded again when Heisler No. 6, also purchased from Meadow River, duplicated the journey made two years earlier by Shay 7.

The 1968 season was the kickoff of “Trips to the Top,” with the completion of the track rebuild from Whittaker to Bald Knob. Shay 7, the lead engine of a doubleheader with Shay 4, caused some excitement on the rebuilt line by derailing just below the summit at Bald Knob during Railfan Weekend 1969. The actual derailment was witnessed by very few as the large crowd was mostly in photo lines at the top of the hill, unable to tell what had happened because of



Heading to Elkins, Shay 4 crosses the Western Maryland bridge over Cheat River between Cheat Junction and Elk River Junction, near Bemis, in 1964. (Russell Baum)



Shay 7 derailed at Bald Knob during Railfan Weekend 1969.

the dense fog. The audience was a little uncertain, but the veteran train crew, a number of whom had worked on log trains, had seen this many times before; the problem was taken care of in less than an hour.

The roster was expanded in 1970 to include all three major type of geared locomotives with the arrival of ex-Middle Fork Railroad/Moore-Keppel Lumber Co. Climax No. 6. The plans were to have the rare, but completely worn out locomotive, which became Cass No. 9, ready for limited operation at the 1973 10th anniversary of the Scenic Railroad. However, subsequent events caused this ambitious plan to be laid aside, and the No. 9 then sat in the weather until 2001 when a complete restoration was started by the MSR&LHA.



Shay 5 under overhaul in the old Cass Shop.

Countering the addition of the Climax was a significant roster loss. After the 1970 season, Shay 7 was found to require replacement of the first boiler course. A new section of boiler shell was procured which proved to be unacceptable. Then another attempt at fabrication by a different vendor was also rejected. The Shay has sat on the dead line ever since.

In 1971, fans enjoyed some completely different railroad action at Cass as the Greenbrier Scenic Railroad began operating on the 90 miles of C&O trackage between Roncevert and Durbin. The power was the very large ex-Reading 4-8-4 No. 2102, pulling a long string of mostly C&O classic passenger cars. The train stopped in Cass, allowing passengers an opportunity to experience the former logging railroad.



Shay No. 7 on the Cass dead line in 1971.

Railfan Weekend 1972 was hugely anticipated because



Shay 2 being unloaded at the Cass shop in 1971 after arrival from Vancouver, B.C., Canada. Shay 4 is the shop goat.

it featured the debut of two “new” Shays, No. 2 bought from British Columbia, and No. 3 leased for 10 years from the Oregon Historical Society. Not only were these engines “big,” No. 2 being one of Lima’s husky Pacific Coast models, and No. 3 a “modern” 80-ton (technically a sister to Shay 5, but with a much more bulky look), they were also oil burners. Both were unique on the East Coast, to say the least!

In May, thanks to the work of the Cass Shop, both locomotives looked brand new. Two months later, the old (1922) Cass Shop burned to the ground with Shay 3 and Climax 9 inside. The No. 3 was pulled out in a daring move by the Cass crew using another locomotive. Otherwise, all anyone could do was watch

as the shop roof fell and walls collapsed inward.

Also in 1972, a train of former Meadow River Lumber Co. equipment arrived, including a number of steel skeleton log cars (the basis of the 2nd generation Cass tourist car fleet), along with an enormous aerial skidder and a log loader, both now on display at Whittaker. In addition, two ex-Army rod locomotives came on flatcars from Ft. Eustis, Va., 2-8-0 No. 612 and 0-4-0T No. 714. The 612 was intended for passenger service over the C&O tracks to Durbin, and the 0-4-0 was supposed to become the Cass shop switcher. Neither plan materialized, and, after long storage, both locomotives went to other owners.

Upper: Shay 2 was nearing the end of its rebuild in the old Cass Shop in 1971.

Left center: southbound Greenbrier Scenic Railroad train with former-Reading 4-8-4 No. 2102 exchanges passengers with the Whittaker train at the Cass depot.

Right center: looking east through the locomotive bays of the Cass Shop after the July, 1972 fire. The worn-out boiler course and the Radley & Hunter smokestack from Shay No. 7 can be identified.



The 1922-1972 shop from the east in 1968: The peaked roof is the storeroom. The coal dock is on the left; the main line to Bald Knob runs adjacent to the building. (Both photos, Bruce DeBolt)



The old shop from the west: tall doors mark the locomotive bays. The highest pair were made to clear a skidder superstructure. The single story portion is the machine shop.



Upper left and right: Shay 3 and Climax 9 after the shop fire.

Center left: Richard Carter and Artie Barkley pick through tools next to the burned out store room.



Center right: Shay 3 under restoration in April of 1973. The shop crew worked outside all winter.



Bottom left: the 612 and 714 after being unloaded in 1972.



Bottom right: Shay 3 in November, 1973. In the background, beyond the flooring warehouse, the collapsed planing mill can be seen.





A November, 1973 charter run found Shays 2 and 3 performing on the S-Curve below Whittaker, hauling ex-Meadow River steel skeleton log cars. Shay 2 was still a “stock” PC-13, having a straight stack and a bald smokebox front, its appearance quite different from today.



Heisler 6 was also used on the 1973 charter shown on the previous page. The Radley & Hunter stack worn on the Meadow River was changed for a standard Cass diamond in 1970.



A southbound Greenbrier Scenic Railroad excursion passes the Cass sawmill and water tank in 1971. On one such trip, a tender wheel derailed as the crew attempted to back in and take water. In years past, there had been a water column at this location, serving the C&O main track; its concrete base pad is visible next to the tender.