

## My 45 Years at Cass. Uncredited photos are by the author.

I first went to Cass in June, 1968 with my wife and friends, Ed and Pam Tennyson. The tiny town did not appear on gas station road maps then; I researched an atlas, then due to my route choice, leery of the smallest local roads, it was a seven hour trip. We rode the Whittaker train, then Ed and I explored around while waiting for the Bald Knob train to return so we could get photos of it. Not taking college classes for the first time in years, my vague plan was to see as many tourist railroads as I could, given my limited time off and money. Now having experienced Cass, I really wanted to come back, but that long drive argued against doing so any time soon. (Photo by John Krause)

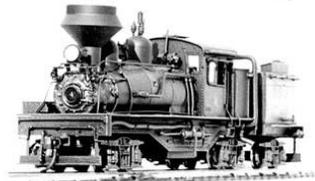
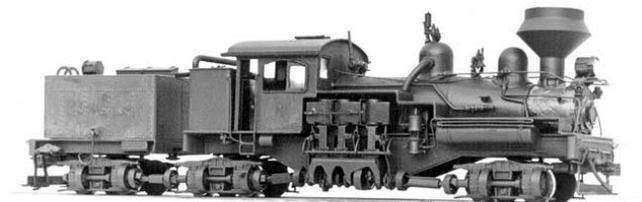
However, subsequently showing off my photos of the trip, I found I had two other friends who wanted to see Cass for themselves, and we headed out on the last weekend of October. There we encountered a friendly brakeman, who, after the trip, steered us up the steps to the old Company Store building, insisting "You boys have to see "the museum." As he turned on the lights in the Civil War Museum (his own enterprise it turned out), I discovered a truly eclectic collection of ancient memorabilia, photos and artifacts, as much West Virginia and Cass logging railroad history as anything else, including a couple photos of the famous Shay 12, the longest, heaviest Shay ever built. Shay 12 was pretty much all I knew about Cass history at the time, and this old guy, Kyle "Catty" Neighbors knew his stuff. We had to hit the road, but I got his address and advice on a faster route home.



Upper photo: Cass Scenic Railroad Shay 4, my first view of a Shay locomotive. I was in such a hurry to get on the train; I left my camera bag sitting on top of the car in the parking lot.



Lower photo: My model No.4; inset is a stock PFM brass Pacific Coast Shay; 1969 price, \$89.95, serious money then. I couldn't afford one, but I had to have a model of Shay 4. I gulped hard as I started sawing pieces off this expensive beauty. Right: the result was good enough for *Railroad Model Craftsman* magazine to run my photos of the engine.



Bear Richard:  
I've been anxious to see more logging railroad material in RMC, and one attempt to improve the situation was the Cass piece, staff authored. I am therefore most pleased to receive your model photos, and I'll use them soon in *BOOMER*. Thank you for your interest in the "more fun" rail hobby magazine, Richard.

TONY KOESTER  
Managing Editor  
Aug. 28, 1972

RAILROAD MODEL CRAFTSMAN CREATIVE CRAFTS MAGAZINE FLYING MODELS CARSTENS HOBBY BOOKS  
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H0-scale model of Mower Lumber Company Shay Number 4, built 1972 by Richard Sparks. The model originally was a PFM Pacific Coast Shay.

The broadside and left side views did indeed appear in the January, 1973 issue of *Railroad Model Craftsman*.



Bertha's Boarding House in Cass: when, after the third trip, I started making overnight visits to Cass, the nearest motel was about 15 miles away and cost about \$15 for a night – not insignificant for me. I slept in my car, on the museum floor, once in one of the former coal bins in front of the hay barn; then Catty walked me up the hill to meet landlady, Bertha Haislop and handed her a five dollar bill. **(Bruce DeBolt)**



Ed Tennyson, with Massachusetts boat carpenter, Tom Landrigan, who became a Cass regular and good friend, along with me in Bertha's kitchen. Bertha charged \$5 for dinner, a room for the night, and breakfast. Meals were prepared on a huge wood range; I'd never seen anything like it. In fact, Bertha's was an immersive educational experience – like going back to the 1920s. Rooms were 8X12 feet, had a small table and chair, linoleum rug, with one light bulb on a wire dangling from the ceiling.



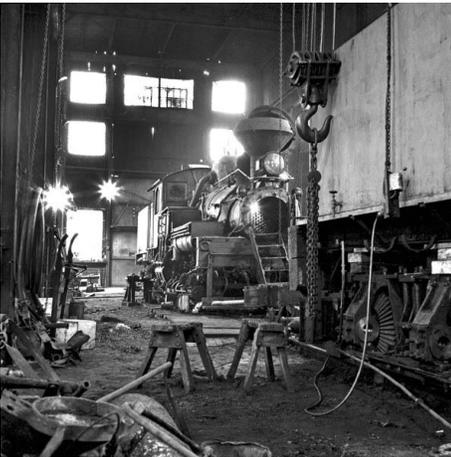
The Cass shop building in 1968, the engine bays on the left were built tall enough so a logging skidder could be run into the shop. The machine shop is on the right. The building with the peaked roof was a warehouse. The shop contained untold piles of stuff left over from the 1900-1960 logging era. Let alone locomotive parts and casting patterns, there was material in the warehouse such as new wagon wheels and black powder blasting supplies that had been stacked in there since the 1910s. **(Bruce DeBolt)**



The Whittaker Train blasting by the shop on my first trip to Cass; when our train left the C&O main line through Cass and turned onto the former lumber railroad track, the vista of the shop and yard, full of interesting rolling stock, was the first thing we passed. Ed and I headed up here immediately after our train got back to Cass.



After corresponding with Catty for a couple months, he suggested I come up in the winter to see the actual repair of locomotives in progress. My first trip inside the shop was in February, 1969. Most of the machines had already been old when they were installed in this “new” shop, built in 1922. They were driven by ceiling mounted line-shafts and belts, powered by a huge electric motor mounted on the floor – truly ancient technology.



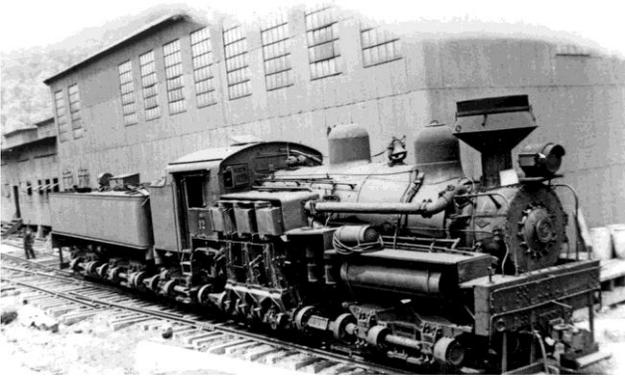
This is probably my most-published photo: CSRR Shay 4 in the shop in February, 1969. The weather in Cass that day was clear, temperature, unbelievably, was around 60, even though there was plenty of snow on the ground. The interior of the old building was like a refrigerator though. The mild forecast was why I even considered this February trip, but luck ran out; we hit thick, blinding, snowfall in the mountains on the way home.



On my first trip to the Cass yard, June, 1968, Ed and I found venerable Shay 5 sitting cold. I’d read that the engine had been completely rebuilt in 1966, but to my unpracticed eye, the engine looked derelict, what with the dirt and rust. I found out later it had suffered a broken eccentric strap several days earlier – needed only a minor repair. Anyway, this engine, which had worked at Cass since 1905, definitely showed the effects of hard use. I thought, “There isn’t a straight line on her!”



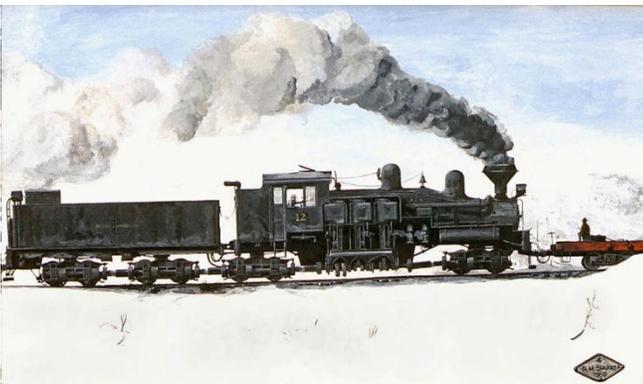
Shay 1 in the Cass yard: I saw No.1 through a broken window in the shop on that first trip. In service in 1963, the first year of the CSRR; then it was scheduled for an overhaul. According to Catty, the 1905 vintage engine had the best boiler on the railroad; needing only new tires. But, Shay 1 stayed rough like this until it was cosmetically restored and sent to the B&O Museum in 1981. The odd “Gothic” arch cab roof was because Shays 1 and 5 got replacement cabs from scrapped 150-ton C&O Shays in the 1920s. The new cab fit 80-ton No.5, but they had to narrow 18” out of the center to fit the smaller 65-ton No.1, leading to the unique roof line.



Shay 12, the longest, heaviest Shay ever, worked at Cass from 1921 to 1942. It was built as a 150-ton, three-truck and lengthened to a 192-ton four truck by the Cass shop in 1933. Most logging railroads only had one or two locomotives of maybe 50-ton size. The Cass roster of about 12 locomotives included two 80-ton, two 100-ton and two 150-ton engines plus this behemoth. Finding out the details behind this (at first, even finding decent photos of the locomotives) was a major focus of my early Cass interest. **(Neighbors Collection)**



Railfan Weekend 1969, I brought two paintings to Cass, including one of Shay 12, my fourth effort at painting a locomotive portrait. Catty surprised me by hanging them on the depot wall; then called conductor, retired engineer, Walter Good over. Walter squinted and said, "Why that's mah ol' ingine." As I photographed Walter posing by the painting, I asked him what running the locomotive had been like. He said cryptically, "Oh that ol' Jonah ingine...!" (And then he clammed up.) Speculation was that the huge locomotive, used hard on poor track, suffered constant mechanical problems, plus, Walter had been the engineer when 12 collided with a Western Maryland Railway locomotive at Spruce, putting the Shay permanently out of service. Walter was held blameless, but apparently after 25 years, still took the accident personally.



My 1969 portrait of Shay 12: at the time, I still hadn't seen a decent photo of the engine. This painting led to a huge change in my status. Suddenly I was more than just a tourist. Catty contracted with me to do additional locomotive pictures for his museum (which he renamed to the Cass Historical Museum). As important, I was adopted into the Cass enthusiast "group," by railfan extraordinaire, John Killoran, the District Parks Administrator in charge of Cass, a major player in the preservation of the railroad, and the founder and coordinator of Railfan Weekend.



Shay 12 sits derelict on the Cass dead line circa 1954, where it lingered from 1942 until 1956. A testament to the remoteness of this location and consequent scarcity of railfan pilferage, the locomotive still has its number and builder's plates, plus its bell and whistle intact. For years, unbelieving railfans heard that the 12 (as well as the 150-ton, four-truck No. 13 behind it) had sat at Cass into the mid-1950s. It was incredible that these unique machines almost, but didn't quite, make it into the age of preservation. After years of looking at bad B&W snapshots, this quality color slide of the 12 blew my mind. **(August Thieme, Tim Martin Collection)**



Railfan Weekend 1969, in addition to launching my professional art career, saw my first trip to Bald Knob, where, just below the summit, Shay 7 stepped off the rails – just out of sight of the majority of the railfan photographers lined up waiting for the train to run past. I was wondering, “What the Hell do we do now?” But, in 1969, most of the trainmen were veterans of the log train days. They had experienced many derailments, and in under an hour, the locomotive was rerailed, and the runby was held without further incident.



1920-vintage Shay 7 was probably the most popular of the five locomotives on the Cass roster in 1969. The locomotive, acquired from the Meadow River Lumber Co. in Rainelle WV, had run to Cass, under its own power in 1964. As evidence of the regard Cass had for No.7, its regular assignment was the tough Bald Knob run – even though technically the 7 was a mechanical twin of Shay 4. As former Meadow River locomotives, both Shay 7 and Heisler 6 came with the Meadow River favorite Radley & Hunter style smokestacks instead of the diamond stacks that had been standard at Cass since 1900. The R&H stack required periodic manual draining of the cinders that accumulated in its funnel whereas the diamond type just expelled them as the engine worked.



Railfan Weekend 1970, railfans were surprised, perhaps shocked, to see that Shay 7 and Heisler 6 had been fitted with diamond stacks during the winter shopping. Probably a stack needed replacement, and the Cass crew wasn't about to figure out

how to make a Radley & Hunter when they had been making diamond stacks for decades. When I saw this photo of the crowd watching the crew rerailed the No.7 (derailments in two consecutive Railfan Weekends) on Gum Curve, it hit me that I was visible in the crowd, and had taken a photo of the rerailing process – much harder than the one the previous year because it was the center truck derailed, on a curve with a guardrail. **(Left photo, John Killoran, Tim Martin Collection)**



At the start of the 1971 season, this sight greeted the faithful in the Cass yard. During shopping, a boiler defect had been found at the bottom of the first course of No.7's boiler. Subsequently, a contract was let for a replacement, which was rejected on arrival, as was a second one from a different vendor. By that time, two "new" Shays had arrived from the west coast. With the additional locomotives, No.7 became surplus, and it still sits derelict, its smaller parts either lost in the 1972 shop fire or used on sister locomotives.



The Cass mill, seen from the south in 1968 – intact, with only one obvious sag in the wall. The larger building is the planing mill, with the flooring warehouse next to it. The sawmill and boiler house are seen in the distance. The tracks are the former C&O Greenbrier Branch. The Cass depot is to the rear of the photographer; the former logging track curves off the mainline just out of sight by the far end of the sawmill. **(Bruce DeBolt)**



This is the Cass mill from the north, circa 1969. The low, brush-filled area is the former mill pond. The log dump, where logs from flatcars were rolled into the pond can be seen on the right. The ramp is the jackslip, with an endless chain to take logs from the pond up the ramp to the huge bandsaws on the cutting floor. The shed with the big windows housed a steam winch known as the "pond skidder", used to move logs around in the log pond. The upper level of the building housed the "filer's shanty," where the saw filer worked to keep the huge bandsaws sharp.



Inside the planing mill in 1969, there were still pieces of jobs sitting on the machines and diagrams of the last items that were being manufactured when the mill closed in 1960. One diagram I remember was a cross-section of the "Standard Pocahontas County school chalk tray" attached to a milling machine.

The amount and sizes of timber used in the construction of this huge building complex, particularly the roof trusses, was truly impressive.



View of the Cass sawmill from the depot in 1972 after the initial collapse of the planing mill. On the left are two old C&O dining cars, known as the Shay Inn, a fast food restaurant back when dining options at Cass were extremely limited. There was a walk-up window on the extended station platform seen here, or seating at tables on the inside.



View from the coal dock toward the planing mill. Looking past the flooring warehouse in November, 1973, one can see beyond the spout of the water tower that the collapse of the planing mill has now involved the entire building. The brick firewall seen on the east side of the flooring warehouse was of little help when these structures burned in 1978.



In August, 1978, the planing mill and flooring warehouse caught fire, the first of two suspicious fires that destroyed the huge, circa 1922, "new" Cass sawmill complex. **(Elmer Burruss)**

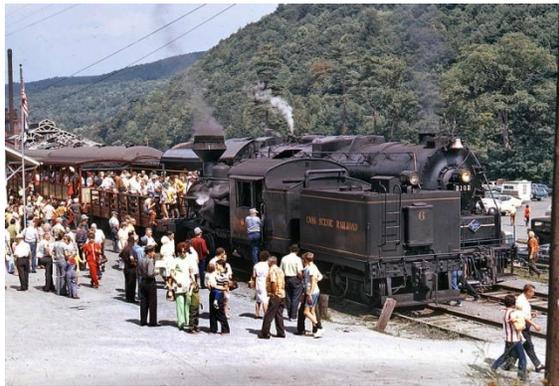


In 1971, Catty Neighbors came up with a surprise, a home for wayward railfans. He rented a 3-bedroom company house (\$25 a month), and recruited tourists looking for a place to stay, much closer and cheaper than the nearest motels. Needless to say, friends were priority, and I was a very regular guest. This was home to Catty's railfan network he called the "Johnny Pulp Club." Catty claimed "Johnny Pulp" was the nickname used by the locals for "The Company," the West Virginia Pulp & Paper Co., original (1900-1942) owners of Cass, the mill and logging operation.



Catty Neighbors in the yard of his home in East Cass, shortly before his untimely death in 1975, with a very small part of his "Forty Year Gatherin'" This hand pump section car and track bicycle were later moved to his museum. **(Phil Bagdon, Tim Martin Collection)**

With Catty's death, the Johnny Pulp house was no more. John Killoran and friends had bought a house in East Cass, and made me welcome. Rather than intrude, often I pitched a tent in their yard, using the outdoor plumbing: the water pump on the porch and the outhouse.



In 1971, there was more to see at Cass than the former logging trains. The Greenbrier Scenic Railroad operated mainline steam excursions between Roncevert and Durbin, 90 miles, using ex-Reading Railroad T-1



Class 4-8-4 No.2102. The trains stopped at Cass so passengers who wished to do so could take a side trip on the Cass train to Whittaker in the interval while the mainline train went the last 14 miles to Durbin and returned.



In the spring of 1971, Cass ran a two-day ferry trip taking the Heisler and train to Webster Springs for "The Salt Sulphur Special," a promotion for a proposed scenic railroad on the Western Maryland Railway out of Webster Springs. Tom Landrigan and I boarded at Durbin and rode all one day to get to Slaty Fork, spending the night in the Western Maryland boarding house. We then rode to Webster Springs the next day. This photo was taken at Bergoo, on the second day. Bergoo had been the headquarters of the Pardee & Curtin Lumber Co. and there were still signs of their large, narrow gauge railroad, including old boxcars in use as sheds in the tiny town. At

Webster Springs, John Killoran took us to lunch and told us about a special trip at Cass planned for May 1972, commemorating a book release, *The Shay Locomotive. Titan of the Timber*, by Mike Koch. **(John Killoran, Tim Martin Collection)**



Also in early 1971, two big oil-burning Shays arrived in Cass. How this actually happened was something I never paid much attention to. People like John Killoran made it happen. The first on the property was 80-ton Shay 3, the former Mt. Emily Lumber Co. No.1, on a 10-year lease (later extended to 20) from the Oregon Historical Society. I was impressed by the apparent large size of the machine, not realizing it was a sister to Shay 5 with basic specifications the same. Its more modern cast trucks and girder frame just made the No.3 bulk larger in my perception than the No.5.



The second acquisition, purchased from Vancouver BC, was exciting for a Shay enthusiast, a genuine Pacific Coast (PC-13) model, the most advanced Shay from the Lima Locomotive Works (of the 1920s). The lookalike fleet of PCs was the closest thing to mass production in Shay manufacturing, with updated appliances like superheat, compound air pump, piston valves, and an all-weather steel cab standard. They were based on the 70-ton design, like Cass No.4, but slightly longer, coming in at about 78-tons. No.2 is the only PC type ever to operate east of the Mississippi.



Panoramic photo of the Koch Weekend in May, 1972 – the gathering John Killoran had talked about the previous year at Webster Springs, a who's who of well-known railroad-oriented authors, historians, photographers, tourist railroad operators,

railroad officials, as well as descendants of Shay inventor, Ephraim Shay, former employees of the Lima Locomotive Works, and three or four members of the lowly Johnny Pulp Club, including myself. **(Gordon Roth)**



Much of the Koch Weekend was spent networking. With such an eclectic group, who could resist? On the left, is Ben Kline, co-author of several books on logging in Pennsylvania, and an engineer on the Strasburg Railroad. Next is Mallory Hope Ferrell, author of many books and articles with a focus on short-line railroads. On the right (and concealing me) is James Gertz, engineman on the Rayonniere logging railroad in Washington State and owner of a 70-ton Willamette geared locomotive, the 32<sup>nd</sup> and final Willamette manufactured by this Lima competitor. Jim, not surprisingly, later was co-author of a book on Willamette locomotives. **(John Killoran, Tim Martin Collection)**



“New” Shays No.3 and No.2 in Upper Gum Field on Koch Weekend: with little time to spare, Cass had not quite worked out the bugs in the oil-burner of No.3, and even with an experienced oil-firing man from the West Coast in the cab, the locomotive threw out dense smoke, including a periodic brief flame-thrower effect with sheets of fire shooting laterally from the bottom of the firebox. The big question among the easterners had been what would oil smoke look and smell like. The answer was: not much different from coal smoke.



Shays 3 and 2 on Koch Weekend sitting on the shop track with the old building in the background. I had no idea this would be my last photo of the historic structure intact. Perhaps because of so many distractions due to the interesting crowd, despite excellent weather, my photos made at the Koch Weekend were generally disappointing.



To illustrate Shay 3's deceptively large appearance, here is a photo of the locomotive parked in the same place as the above shot. This shows the heavy, long-wheelbase trucks, comparatively long frame, and the inexplicably long cab. This must have been a pain for the fireman on a coal-fired 80-ton; instead of simply pivoting with the loaded shovel – it was two steps from the coal bunker to the firebox door. Nonetheless, the 80-ton model was traditionally made by Lima as noticeably longer than a 70-ton, and surprisingly, also longer than a 90-ton. 80-ton Cass No.5 was rebuilt in the 1920s with a shorter cab and longer coal bunker.



In July, 1972, the Cass shop was destroyed by a late-night fire. Shay 3, restored only months before, was parked inside. Climax 9, acquired in bad condition from Moore-Keppel in Ellamore WV in 1971 was also inside, but post-fire was not much worse than before. The Cass crew managed to haul No.3 out during the fire, but the damage had been done with its glass and copper parts melted. Adding to the worries was requirement the locomotive be returned to the Oregon Historical Society in operating condition. The railroad could not just forget this repair job as they did with No.7 the year before.



A month after the Cass shop fire, the Whittaker train passes the ruins of the parts warehouse. The Cass crew built some small sheds, but proceeded to carry on locomotive maintenance mostly in the open – winter and summer until new facilities were finished over the next two to three years.



As to my not getting decent photos during the Koch Weekend, I got other chances. Mike Koch came back and ran a second charter in November, six months after his big weekend, as well as another in November, 1973 (seen here). With a smaller, more relaxed crowd, everybody did much better at the business of railfan photography.



Not that the Koch November, 1972 charter was without its celebrities. I scored lunch with Dan Ranger, author of *Pacific Coast Shay. Strong Man of the Woods*, the Shay “bible” before Mike Koch wrote his book. Dan, on the left, was an officer and locomotive engineer on the Shay-powered Graham County Railroad in North Carolina. I’m on Dan’s left; fellow Johnny Pulpers George Fizer and John King are on my left. Then in the bowler hats are author/historian Ben Kline, engineer on the Strasburg Railroad and subsequently Director of the Pennsylvania State Railroad Museum, along with his fireman, Linn Moedinger, who became President of the Strasburg and a recognized authority on the restoration of steam locomotives. (John Krause, Tim Martin Collection)



In the fall of 1972, West Virginia acquired two surplus rod locomotives from the U.S. Army Transportation Corps at Ft. Eustis VA, which had closed down steam locomotive training. The 612 was one of a mass-produced 2-8-0 class built

during WWII to supplement the war-ravaged European railroads. The 714 was an industrial 0-4-0T locomotive, built to switch the power plant at St. Elizabeth's Hospital in Washington DC and transferred to the USATC when it became surplus. The 612 was intended to power excursions planned for the ex-C&O line between Cass and Durbin. The 714 was to become the Cass shop switcher. Both engines were operational when they arrived at Cass, but for various reasons, planned usage never materialized.



Feeling satisfaction from the experience of the small Koch charter, the Johnny Pulp Club decided to try its own charter trip. I was appointed to negotiate with the Cass Superintendent and John Killoran. As the only JPC member with the immediate means, I was also elected make the required financial deposit with the Park System. Thus, in April, 1973, I led 21 paying passengers (I passed the hat), plus train crew and a couple freeloaders in my first experience as a Cass photo excursion coordinator. This was perhaps THE first, Cass train charter between a private individual and the State Park System; no price schedule existed. Killoran set the fee for 8 hours, a locomotive and three-man crew at \$125. **(John Krause)**



The charter, The Woodhick Special, ran in less than perfect April weather. We had been hoping for March, and the possibility of snow (which would have been a first-time experience for us), but Killoran pushed us to April to ensure a locomotive would be available. With the small number of photographers, we all could fit into a caboose, thus using only authentic rail logging equipment (a first), and could stage photo lines at places not used at Railfan Weekends because they were too cramped. This photo is at Snake Curve, just below Old Spruce, where even 20 photographers were a crowd.



Catty told me about a private charter in March, 1975. I knew the operator, Carl Franz, slightly, and drove to Cass, where I talked my way aboard at the depot. Carl surprised me by consulting on the photo stops, "...since I had the experience." The reason I came was the possibility of taking snow pictures, and Carl got snow, but I quickly decided blowing snow was not really magical. I spent a lot of time in the caboose, leaving the runbys to the more hardy enthusiasts. Carl became well-known for his annual charters at Cass and elsewhere, even running steam in Europe. **(Wayne Sherwin)**



In 1975, I was contacted by a fellow who had come on the Woodhick Special. Bill Bell wanted to organize a luxury, limited-subscription (50-passenger) Cass charter as a fund raiser for his club, the Chesapeake & Allegheny Live Steamers. I wound up as the trip coordinator for 15 annual CALS charters, generally held in early May before the regular Cass season. One thing about making regular pre- and post-season visits to Cass was seeing things uncommon during the regular season. Here, in 1974, was a unique approach to locomotive cleaning. Note that the main shop has not been rebuilt yet after the fire, but the car shop is in and functioning.



## Rare Sights

When Cass connected with the C&O and Western Maryland railroads, there were occasional special trips on the main lines. On trips to Elkins, for the Forest Festival, people in-the-know were favored with the chance to ride the Cass train over the Western Maryland's rather spectacular High Bridges of Cheat, spanning the Shavers Fork. **(Bob Hoke)**



As CALS trip coordinator, I often staged things just because I could. One time I thought a nose-to-nose shot at the wye would be spectacular – certainly unique. When I set it up, I discovered the rarity of the scene apparently escaped my 50 passengers. I was the only one who took a photo.



In 1977, the diehard Shay men at Cass were still a bit leery of the Heisler. The long, skinny boiler worried them when it came to steep grades and keeping a safe level of water in the boiler. It was seldom trusted to go to Bald Knob. But, here we are at the lookout on a spectacular day, the small charter group making a relatively people-free picture.



On charters, we would often go up the mountain one day and, as here, up the former C&O to Durbin the next day. The two old tank cars were refurbished and donated to Cass by a petroleum dealer when the oil-burning Shays came to Cass in 1972. The story was he hoped they would be used to transport fuel from his Charleston facility to Cass, but the cars pretty much stayed at Cass as oil storage, or used as seen here – props on photo freights. This shot was made on the Cass to Durbin line, which was wiped out by a flood in 1985. As of 2018, the private operator of the Cass railroad is making progress in restoring this line to service.



One of the unique locomotives at Cass is an antique GE 45-ton side-rod diesel locomotive occasionally used as a switcher. In 1981, I arranged for our CALS charter guests to be picked up at the Cass depot by No.20 and carried to their catered dinner at the shop. The train crew had other ideas, and kidnapped the carload of passengers for a round trip to Whittaker; the little side-rod diesel sounding like an angry road-grader charging up the hill, both radiators steaming spectacularly. As far as I know, this was the only diesel-powered passenger trip ever to Whittaker, and our guests were an hour late to their dinner. The little GE has now been inoperable for many years. **(Ray Beimel)**



In 1981, the newly-acquired Western Maryland "Big" 6 Shay, the final and largest Shay built by Lima was available for use on the Durbin line. Cass management had borrowed some old Western Maryland hoppers for use as photo props with the 6, which made for a unique long train between Cass and Durbin. The line to Durbin provided variety, and had its scenic spots, but overall, it was a fairly dull ride compared to going up the mountain.



This is another example of making a photo opportunity by doing things - just because I could. I had two trains, a single locomotive on a photo freight and a double-header pulling passengers, which I combined for the run back to Cass.



This night photo was made at the wye on a small private charter back when one could still get old-fashioned large, press-type flash bulbs.

Nowadays, taking night photos is still popular, but the simple flash bulbs have been replaced by electronic devices, which typically require an outside power source or other logistics not practical in a middle-of-nowhere mountaintop location like the Cass wye.



Long-gone Cass of 1971 is seen before the deadly flood of 1985 when there still was a remnant of "historic downtown" Cass - tattered remains of the bars, stores, hotels, brothels and the like that had provided for the needs and entertainment of the loggers and sawmill crews from 1900 - 1960. In my zeal to get to the railroad action, this interesting past history was mere background noise, nearly invisible to me as I drove through. After November, 1985, there was nothing left of these classic structures.



To me, this is ideal Cass – as it was in 1968. We have a sunny, summer day, the old depot, the mill intact, and the Whittaker train waiting to go with original wood flatcars. Most of the crew would be veteran old-timers; the town still had actual residents, a mayor, ordinances, a couple of local businesses, a constable. Life was not perfect, but it was real, in contrast to the Disneyesque tableau of Cass in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. **(Bruce DeBolt)**



In May, 1975, at night, hours after a CALS charter group had left for home, the Cass depot burned. The state moved in two trailers, one with restrooms, the other for ticket sales, which served until a new depot was completed.



In early May, 1979, construction on the replacement depot was well along. The new building closely reproduced the footprint of the old one, but incorporated the ornate architectural details and trim that were the C&O standard for depots built around the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. One major design difference was the new depot lacked the raised baggage platform and freight room door of the old structure, which were replaced with large, ground level doors leading to the restrooms.



During the 1980-81 off season, the Cass shop crew refurbished Shay 1 and 0-4-0T No.714. Here, the locomotives are loaded on flatcars, ready for transport to the B&O Museum in Baltimore where they had been traded for Western Maryland's "Big" 6 Shay. The restoration of Shay 1 was strictly cosmetic, apparently using parts, including trucks, not originally from this locomotive. The 714 had come to Cass in 1972 in operational condition, and it had remained in good shape. Rather quickly, the B&O Museum put this locomotive into service hauling excursions around the museum. No.1 was lettered "Greenbrier Cheat & Elk"; the 714 was lettered for its original identity, "Saint Elizabeth Hospital" No.4.





The “Big”6 Shay, newly received from the B&O Museum: the locomotive could not be used on Cass Hill for several years pending rebuild of the tracks to accommodate this large machine, at 162-tons, approximately twice the weight of the next largest Shay on the Cass Scenic Railroad roster. Given the abundant caution, one had to reflect on the 20 years of service on Cass Hill by GC&E/Mower Shay 12, mechanical near-twin of Shay 6. Had the track maintenance really been any better then? It’s doubtful. Still, the idea of derailing this monster on a tourist run gave pause for thought. Until the remedial work on the hill track was completed, the 6 was used on the Cass to Durbin line.

## **Destruction – Cass Isn’t a Museum**



In 1985, one of the 1942-vintage Mower Camp cars succumbed to the elements. It was becoming apparent that management had its mission solely defined by the finite time and money appropriated by the state – and with no apologies. John Killoran had moved on; a railfan definitely was no longer in charge. Those in authority were going to preserve only what equipment was necessary to provide the basic train experience promised in the literature, with no evident regret about the loss of rare artifacts accumulated in the early years of the Scenic Railroad.



The 612 in 2008; it was hard to believe this locomotive had been trapped at Cass since it was delivered in operable condition in 1972. Many wondered why this engine had not been offered to a better home. It seemed that once the state bureaucrats got something on the books, it just stayed forever. Parked behind the 612 is the carcass of Shay 7, also on the Cass dead line since 1972.



Four South Branch Valley Railroad Alco diesels, two rare MSR1s and two S2s, along with assorted rolling stock had been sent to Cass for storage, and then trapped by the destruction of the Cass to Durbin track in the 1985 flood. This equipment had once been in nice condition, but by 2008, deterioration was rampant.



Then, amazingly, in 2010, somebody in management got on a cleanup kick. The four SBV RR diesels were scrapped, as were the two old C&O diners that had once served as the Shay Inn Restaurant, and then later as the Cass Superintendent's offices. It was a shame the old diners had to go this way. One, *The Stuart House*, had a measure of fame as having once been a theater car on first class C&O passenger trains. The cars were examined by potential collectors, but they were too long and heavy to be removed by rail or highway – so they were cut up. **(Bruce Elliott)**



Fortunately, the 612 was spared scrapping. It was sold and moved out in 2011, eventually winding up in the huge locomotive collection at the *Age of Steam* roundhouse in Sugar Creek OH. It's a shame this took 30 years. **(Bruce Elliott)**



The “Cass Graded School”, an impressive wooden building, was an interesting sight at the south end of town. Unwanted since the early 1960s, it slowly collapsed and was fully removed in the 2010 cleanup. Inside reminded me of my elementary school days.



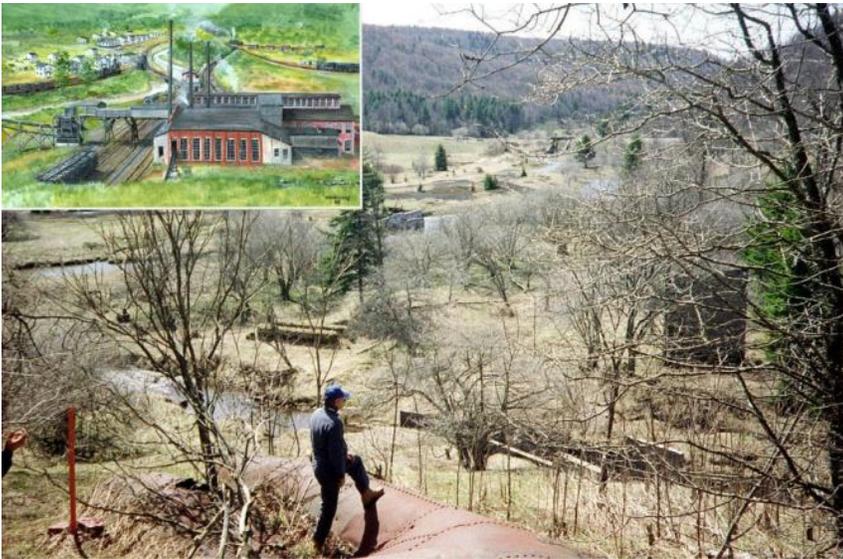
### On a More Upbeat Note:

For the first time in history, in 2008, the Cass Scenic Railroad had six locomotives fully serviceable at the same time. A bucket truck was rented so a photographer could record this impressive pose. **(Walter Scriptunas II)**

The town site of Spruce, seen from the south, is one of many ghost towns in West Virginia. Established at the turn of the



20<sup>th</sup> Century, it served a small community, and, like the rest, vanished when the jobs moved on. Spruce, however, is better known because it is visited by the Cass Scenic Railroad.



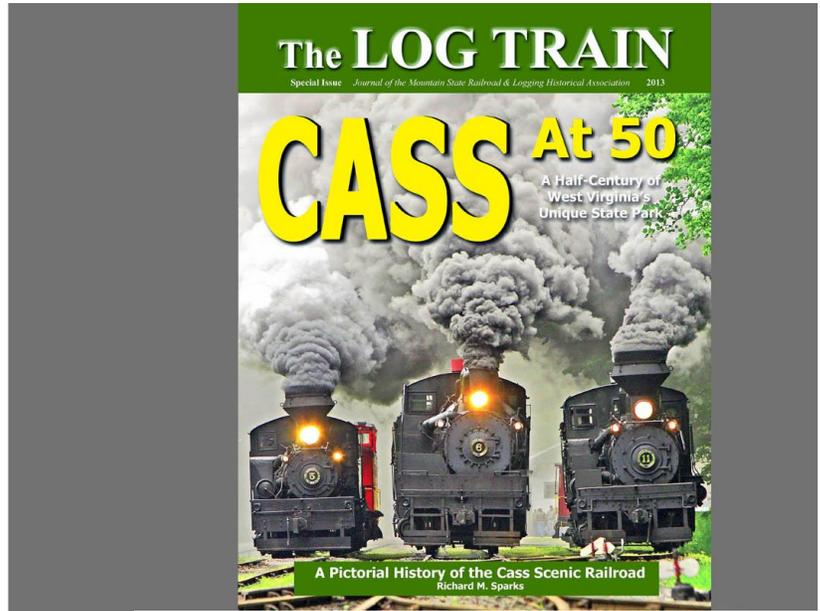
This photo, a view from the north, shows Spruce as it is now, a few concrete foundations from the pulp mill, abandoned in 1927, still evident. The inset painting shows Spruce in its heyday, a town of maybe 250 people, from the same vantage point. After the pulp mill closed, the Western Maryland Railway took over the town, and it became a locomotive terminal for helper engines used for coal trains on the grade from Slaty Fork to Spruce. The town was completely abandoned and demolished by 1960.

**MSR&LHA:** The Mountain State Railroad & Logging Historical Association was organized in 1982 in a meeting hosted by John Killoran and Cass Assistant Superintendent Fred Bartels. I was at the meeting and became one of 14 founding members. MSR&LHA was incorporated as a Federal 501(c)(3) tax exempt, all volunteer group. Its stated interests were all of West Virginia, with the focus on Cass. It was decided early on that there would be a quarterly journal, called *The Log Train*. Within a few years MSR&LHA boasted over 500 members from 40 states and five countries.

“Railroaded” by John Killoran into being MSR&LHA vice president in 1982, I was later president, and except for one year off, on the Board for 30 years. The original idea was to do volunteer work at the railroad, including preservation of non-revenue equipment, which the paid Cass employees were completely against – threatening to strike if we tried. Our fundamental idea shot, the majority of BOD meetings typically were talk and little sustained action. Officers were railfans hoping the business would run itself. Presidents, including me, typically were ineffective leaders. When John Killoran left West Virginia for a new career in 1983, MSR&LHA momentum essentially stopped. Importantly, we didn’t have enough revenue to do anything significant. For the next 10 years Cass management didn’t take the organization seriously. Then, after a fortuitous turn of events, subsequently enjoyed 20 years of recognition by West Virginia as a dynamic volunteer organization; however, MSR&LHA has been struggling since 2015 to again find a mission.



A MSR&LHA colossal failure: in the early 1980s, the Board had report of a shed with two narrow gauge passenger cars inside. There was absolutely no follow-up. However, a 1999 field trip turned up this structure, undoubtedly that same “shed,” made of two very rare ex-West Virginia Midland/Pardee & Curtin narrow gauge passenger cars. On the left is a baggage car; on the right the parlor car, the *Holly*; condition still amazingly good, but the MSR&LHA, engaged in other projects, let action drop again. After another 10 plus years of weather and vandalism, the Alexander Chapter, NRHS removed these cars, in deplorable condition, and began restoration.



Publishing *The LOG TRAIN* was the only sustained accomplishment of the MSR&LHA for years. I was the editor/publisher of our quarterly journal from 1993 until 2013. Content generally ranged from 12 to 24 pages, depending on input. Members loved the magazine, but most could not be bothered to contribute. A typical issue from the middle of my editorial tenure is on the left. The last issue I prepared is on the right, a 64-page book, actually a concise history of 100 years of Cass railroading. I wrote all its copy, did the composition/layout, and even took the majority of the photos.

**Whittaker Logging Camp (Camp One) – Built 1991-1994:** MSR&LHA decided on a bold step. This was to create a 1940s logging camp reconstruction having representative shanties, camp cars, log cars, log loader, and an aerial skidder. The project involved volunteers building 1,400 feet of new track, including three switches, and utilizing historic Mower and Meadow River heavy logging equipment that was otherwise just sitting in the yard at Cass. The idea was every Cass train rider would see, and have the opportunity of exploring, the exhibit, thereby broadening the historic context of Cass beyond just the company town and sawmill by including the extensive woods operations that were the basis of the lumber enterprise. In the end, MSR&LHA calculated that Camp One had cost \$110K, and that volunteers had put in a total of 10,000+ hours. The value to the state was calculated at \$800K.



Due to the miraculous emergence of a couple of dynamic individuals on the MSR&LHA Board, Cass management finally began paying some attention. More important, the organization got a significant grant from the Claude Benedum Foundation, and then found the courage to borrow money to develop the Whittaker Camp One display. In February, 1992, MSR&LHA volunteers had spent two weekends salvaging rail from the C&O grade south of Cass. Here, part of our bounty comes through the S-Curve below Whittaker as we wait to find out if we can learn to lay track – let alone work all day in freezing conditions.



The mainline switch was the critical place at Whittaker. We amateurs had to finish laying this turnout in two months to ensure that Cass trains could start the season on time. It turns out there are literally hundreds of parts to a turnout, and the “kit” does not come with directions. The man in the bib overalls was our consultant, Dave Lopez, a CSX track foreman. We quickly found out that he and the Cass track foreman often did not agree. This switch point was actually laid and spiked three times before Cass approved it.



As the work weekends went on, fewer and fewer volunteers showed up. We found we could lay track with four to six guys – good thing! Living and working together under harsh conditions made for some really tight friendships.

In a way, camp cars were the genesis of the Camp One idea. An entrepreneur had refurbished the last intact 1942-vintage Mower camp car, No.419, and had built a reproduction camp car; using the two to set up a display at Cass, for which he charged admission – apparently without much success. MSR&LHA decided to buy him out, and expanded the idea into making a full-blown logging camp display at Whittaker, utilizing also the Meadow River skidder and loader rusting away in the Cass yard, and recreating the shanties in which some loggers had lived. Here, Bob Hoke and I are re-roofing the old car No.419.





In March, 1993, the three sidings at Whittaker were well along. We had gotten pretty good at this stuff – not that mistakes like this one weren't made! Most of the work at Camp One was done in the off-season because that's when many of the volunteers had the spare time, and we didn't have to work around the tourists. In the winter, the solitude at Whittaker was simply amazing. In fact, it was downright disturbing when the spring brought strangers nosing around.



In early May, 1993, the two camp cars and the bobber caboose were hauled up the hill by Shay No.2 and placed on the completed Camp One siding No.1. This was definitely a once-in-a-lifetime train movement at Cass.





One morning in 1994, Camp One volunteers found some interesting activity to explore near the Cass depot. Digging a ramp on a siding to load rail equipment onto or off a flatcar had been done before at Cass, but digging the ramp into the roadbed of the main track didn't seem to us like the best idea.

This ramp was dug to load Shay 3 for its shipment back to Oregon, its 20-year lease having expired in 1992. Supervising are Gearold Cassell, veteran Cass conductor, and Rob Brown, Cass Assistant Superintendent. On the right is one of the prisoners from the work camp the state had at Cass for several years. MSR&LHA often used inmates to work with us at Camp One. This man and his brother had been under my supervision on several occasions and we got along well. One time he said, "If you had been our dad, we wouldn't be in prison!" I was stunned and flattered, but at the same time thought, "This guy is a born con-man; who knows what he really means?" It was certainly a once-in-a-lifetime conversation.



The day before Railfan Weekend 1996, we were awakened at MSR&LHA HQ very early in the morning by tremendous commotion and flashing lights outdoors. We got up to discover the Greenbrier River unexpectedly in flood stage. First thought: how are the crowds of people going to get here for the Weekend? Second thought: how am I going to get home? The route home lay across that bridge, and I had no idea how widespread the damage to the east might be. It could be a repeat of the big flood of '85 with many miles of roads closed! I actually called my office and told them I may not be in on Monday.



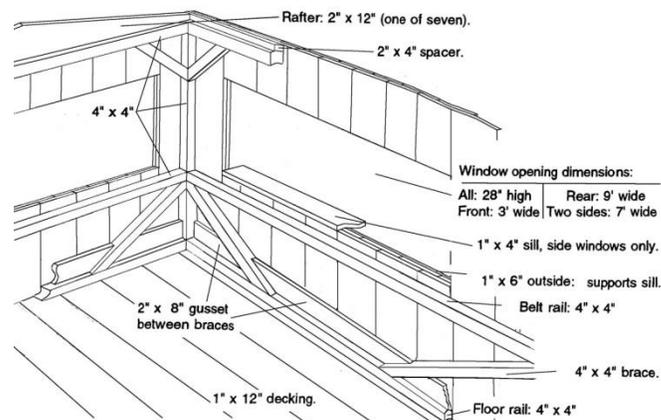
Somehow, a crowd found ways to get into Cass and places to park, which were suddenly and unexpectedly scarce. The parking lot, which had just been repaved and freshly striped, was pretty much wiped out - the floodwaters having left numerous large craters. **(Susan Sparks)**



The Mower Lumber Company, as with other West Virginia operations, used trains of camp cars with sleeping and dining facilities to house the majority of camp employees. However, there were also portable shanties to house the foreman, the saw filer, and other “upper echelon” workers. When it came time to move the camp, the shanty buildings were picked up by a log loader and transported on log cars. (CSRR Taber Collection)



We went looking in 1993 for the remains of the final Mower log camp, abandoned on Bald Knob in 1960, in order to determine how the shanties had been constructed. Luckily, there was enough left to gather the needed information, and I prepared plans covering the main variations in construction.



INTERIOR DETAIL: FILER'S SHANTY



We built three shanties, two living quarters type and one saw filer's shanty, the latter having large windows to provide additional light for the saw and axe sharpening work. We modified one living quarters building with a hinged wall so it could be opened to enable visitors to see inside.

We had speculated about the crimes the prisoners we were working with had committed. It seemed likely this had been relatively minor stuff as security was minimal. Finally, while nailing a roof on a shanty, Grady Smith simply asked the inmate helping him what he was in for. He said, “I killed six people; would have killed more, but ran out of bullets!”



The completed Whittaker Camp One, with the three shanties, two camp cars and bobber caboose on siding No.1, loader and log cars on siding No.2, and the skidder with additional log cars on No.3.



The skidder in place at Camp One showing the three winch engines used for raising the tower and actual skidding operation. Original plans were to erect the 85-foot tower, and ground anchors were prepared for the guy wires and stays, but we could not get engineering approval from the state, so the tower remains displayed horizontal on the ground.

The skidder in service at Meadow River Lumber Company around 1960 shows the tower in place. Most of the cables visible are back stays and guy wires, but one is the main skidding cable, the far end of which could be anchored a mile or more away. By means of the "trolley," under the control of the leverman, which ran back and forth on the main cable, a line was dropped to pick up bunches of logs for transport back to the skidder for loading and movement to the sawmill. (John Killoran, Tim Martin Collection)





The distant center building is the venerable Terry House, since 1992, the headquarters/dormitory of the MSR&LHA. During the construction of Camp One, there were 14 beds crammed in upstairs; more typically 11 or 12, still making for some busy mornings, especially back when there was just one toilet.



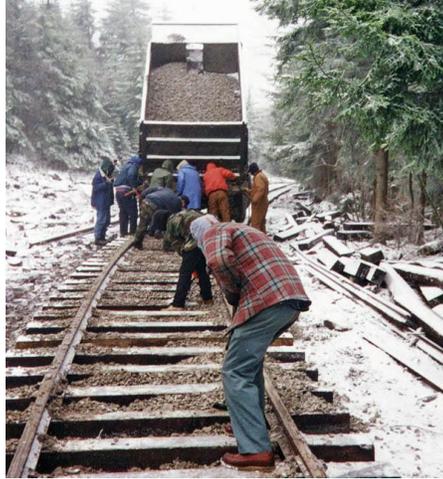
The Terry House nerve center is the big boardroom table in the dining room – the scene of enormous meals and MSR&LHA Board of Directors' meetings. For some, the ambiance of this quirky place is incentive enough to come to Cass.



In 1995, MSR&LHA, decided to rebuild an original 1910s-vintage wooden flat car. Only one was found still in relatively decent shape, primarily needing the deck stringers replaced. This required four 8"X13"X 40' timbers special ordered at about \$4,000. Here, MSR&LHA stalwarts move them into the *Stuart House*. Later, they were stored in the schoolhouse for security. Then, the following spring, the timbers were missing and Cass management "knew nothing." Finally, the Assistant Superintendent came clean. The town crew had cut up our timbers to use for shoring up buildings! Adding insult, management in Charleston said we could not be compensated - and so ended the flat car project.

Below: on the left is the "CC Garage;" Lefty's Barbershop occupied the near end from the 1940s until 2009 when Cass management decided to demolish the precarious old building and build a new barbershop. I had the feeling that some of our timbers could have been found in this rubble. (Left photo, Bob Hoke)





In 1997, Camp One veterans often opined that we actually missed laying track – ah, the camaraderie of working in the cold and snow.

A plan emerged that also addressed attracting attendees to Railfan Weekend. The “Big” 6 Shay had never been to Bald Knob because the mainline curve at the Wye, 10 miles up the mountain from Cass, was too sharp to handle the large Shay.

“Big” 6 at Bald Knob – box office gold!

Changing the mainline alignment was beyond

us, but theory was we could rebuild and realign the legs of the wye and use it like a switchback to bypass the sharp curve. The wye, laid in the 1950s, was the last remaining actual logging track on the railroad – battered 70-pound rails up to 100 years old, minimally spiked to untreated ties. Adding to the challenge, since the railroad was repairing a massive washout below Old Spruce, rail access was cut off. All construction materials had to be delivered by road, either to Old Spruce or DP Switch, and then transported the last mile by track speeders. Anyway, the rebuild was successful, but afterward Cass realigned the mainline curve – making our switchback unnecessary.



**Rebuild Western Maryland Track:** In 1997 the West Virginia State Rail Authority took over the ex-Western Maryland Railway, former CSX trackage from Elkins to Webster Springs. Our Association purchased supplies and paid part of the labor costs to rebuild the five miles of track near Spruce, making trips from Cass to Spruce possible. The cost to the Association was \$12K, and used 300 volunteer hours.

In 1996, in anticipation of the state takeover, MSR&LHA had transported our speeder by highway to the “new” West Virginia Central line to get some idea of the work needed to restore service to the long-

fallow ex-WM line from Spruce, north to Cheat Junction. I actually skipped my 35<sup>th</sup> high school reunion, which I had paid for, to go along on this adventure. At the start, our carefully-planned trailer to rail transfer of the speeder suffered from an embarrassing miscalculation as it missed the rails completely when it rolled down the ramp from the trailer.



Since the state would not be taking over maintenance of the West Virginia Central for some time, and we wanted the line operational ASAP for MSR&LHA charter purposes, we made several unauthorized trips (i.e. trespassing), clearing culverts to prevent further washouts, but mostly just joyriding with the added thrill of keeping one eye out for any authorities who may have taken a dim view. Beyond Big Cut, was a massive washout, which we crossed, but 20 years later, still dissuades the West Virginia from running excursion trains west of Spruce.

**Acquire 90-ton Shay Locomotive (1998):** As early as 1996, Cass management had requested MSR&LHA assistance in locating an additional large geared locomotive. Since the location of every possibility was known, it was a matter of working the telephones. Eventually, in 1998, our repeated queries identified a 90-ton Shay potentially available at the San Diego Railroad Museum. A slight majority of the San Diego museum board was of the opinion that the Shay was superfluous to their collection. This group felt the Shay should be sold and the proceeds used to build the collection with more relevant artifacts. A price was quoted at \$100K, but we were warned an election was upcoming and chances were that the new board may not approve the sale. With West Virginia notorious for not coming up with funding rapidly, MSR&LHA put up the down payment immediately. The Association also arranged the complex task of loading the locomotive on trucks and shipping it to Cass. In addition, the Museum and the truckers were amenable to MSR&LHA volunteers to assist with packing and loading the locomotive, so six members, including myself, took off, planning to spend as many as five days working at San Diego, cutting the labor cost significantly. Cass also sent four employees for the job. The Shay was loaded and started east in four days. It arrived in Cass 10 days later, and was rebuilt and in service within 10 months. The reason the locomotive went by truck was that Cass had no rail access at the time. If the locomotive had come by rail, it would have been necessary to unload it from the rails in West Virginia and load it onto a truck anyway – at considerable extra expense. On this project, the MSR&LHA cost was \$5K, and volunteer hours were calculated at 300.



Six MSR&LHA volunteers meet the beast; our first view of our new 90-ton Shay in the San Diego Railroad Museum facility at Campo, CA. Cass Assistant Super, Billy Thomas and Shop Foreman, Artie Barkley had arrived here the previous day and separated the locomotive and cistern.

This was in the desert, close to the Mexican border, but the weather was colder than we had expected (or packed clothes for).



Most of our first day was spent as guests on the Museum's excursion train across the border and to the huge brewery at Tecate. The excursion locomotive was this EMD MRS1 model, interesting because it had been built to the same military specifications as the Alco MRS1 locomotives familiar to us from their long residence on the dead line at Cass; the EMD's general outline and trucks looked almost identical. The other locomotives are San Diego & Arizona Eastern, the international common carrier that brought covered hoppers of grain to the brewery from the American Midwest and through San Diego to Tecate.



Left: After three days of securing hardware, hunting up odd parts, packing and prepping, the newly christened Cass Shay 11 is lifted, ready for the trailer to be rolled under it. One of my jobs was to letter the locomotive. I have never understood why people seem to think I can do sign painting (or why it was essential here), but I went to the farm supply store down the road from the museum, bought a brush and paints, and did my best. As I was working, Artie said, "I don't know if anybody's broke it to 'em yet that we're renumbering their locomotive." Right: after 10 days on the road, Shay 11 arrives at Cass. **(Right photo, George Deike)**



Shay 11, in Cass guise and in service, September, 1999; here, it is still an oil-burner with its as-built bald smoke box front. It was outshopped at Cass in May, 2001 as a coal burner with a diamond stack and the Cass-preferred ring design cast smokebox front, which the crew says makes it a “real” West Virginia engine, even though Shay 12 went through its life with the bald door, and Mower/CSRR Shay 4 spent decades so-equipped.



Left: Moore-Keppel Climax No.6 in 1971 when it arrived at Cass. The 70-ton locomotive was the spare engine on a marginal short line for years, then abandoned outdoors for a decade. The smokestack was missing, but its number and company name were still legible.

Right: Climax No.6, now No.9 on the CSRR roster, in 1999. At that point, it had been through the shop fire and sat on the Cass dead line for nearly 30 years. MSR&LHA decided in 2000 to restore the engine. For that, a facility was required.

**Construct Restoration Shop Building (2001):** The Cass railroad made it clear that MSR&LHA could not occupy existing shop facilities for the extended period of time that would be required to rebuild the Climax and handle other potential restoration projects. Consequently, the Association funded and coordinated the construction of a 40’X 100’ metal building, adjacent to the west end of the existing Cass car shop. On completion, the building was donated to the park; however, MSR&LHA established a fund to handle subsequent ongoing maintenance costs. The Association cost for construction was \$140K. The value of the building donated to the Park was estimated at \$350K. Volunteer hours were calculated at 900.



The MSR&LHA’s shop just after completion in 2001: The building was dedicated as the John P. Killoran Memorial Restoration Shop after our friend, Cass stalwart and founder, who died suddenly just after his retirement from the Army Corps of Engineers in Alaska in 2005. Here, “our” CSRR Shay No.11 brings the Bald Knob train by the new building. Incidentally, construction of this building was delayed for over a year by the need to have a state law prohibiting construction in state parks by non-state organizations altered.



The carcass of the Climax newly installed in the Killoran shop; it had first been taken into the main Cass shop so that the old boiler could be removed with the overhead crane. The terrible condition of the locomotive was more apparent in the harsh shop lighting. As it was disassembled, it was found to be even worse than anticipated, abused beyond worn out before being left to weather for decades. The most level-headed of the MSR&LHA group managing the restoration conceded if they had known how bad it was going to be, they would have never agreed to the restoration project.



Having a “new” boiler available was one argument for taking on the Climax restoration. Long after the locomotive came to Cass, this boiler, located by a railfan, was acquired in Canada. An exact match for No.9’s original, the story was it had been built as a replacement for a logging company, but then never used on a locomotive – only at low pressure for heating a greenhouse. It turned out that it actually had indeed been briefly used on a locomotive. MSR&LHA sent it to a boiler shop that restored it to like-new condition. The other boiler is the original from Heisler No.6, replaced by a new one in 2004.



An exact copy of the Climax cab was built, all new steel except for the frame bows.



A view of a Climax truck rebuild shows new parts, such as the brake beam, and extensive weld repairs.



Another argument for rebuilding the Climax was they are so rare – supposedly only three serviceable in the country. But, literally days after our shop was completed, this fully restored, operable Climax, former sister Moore-Keppel locomotive No.3, was delivered to the Durbin & Greenbrier Valley Railroad in Durbin, 15 miles from Cass; quite the surprise! This 55-ton locomotive started pulling tourist trains along the Greenbrier River out of Durbin in 2002.



An early Cass acquisition was the ex-Elk River Coal & Lumber Co. bobber caboose dating from the 1880s. Used frequently at Cass from the 1960s, but 40 years later, needed a rebuild. MSR&LHA accommodated, rolling out the completed product in 2003.



**Cass Railfan Weekend  
May 18, 19 and 20**



Multiple runbys. Freight and passenger trains to Spruce, Old Spruce, Bald Knob, Whittaker, S-Curve, Leatherbark Creek, Gum Field. Featuring the iconic Triple Locomotive Runby

Evening whistle blow, town and shop tours, swap meet, night photo/video sessions

**Night Photo Sessions both Friday and Saturday**

<b>3-Day Scenic Mountain Railroad Weekend \$250</b>	<b>Cass Scenic Railroad</b>
Box lunches included.	1-800-225-5982
Dinner, breakfast options	All major credit cards accepted

Full information, [www.msrlha.org](http://www.msrlha.org)

For 30 years (1985-2014), the most visible activity of MSR&LHA was the annual Railfan Weekend, continuing the annual spring tradition started by John Killoran in 1965. The RFW also became our main revenue source as we discovered people would pay for experiences they could not get on the regular tourist runs.

The program kept growing. Eventually I came to feel that bigger was not better (a minority opinion). We seemed to be asking more than many potential customers could afford – dollars as well as the annual leave needed to cover an expanding program. The added operations also seemed to strain the Railroad’s resources as well. Plus, a headache, the Park’s policy changed periodically on whether MSR&LHA was its customer or its business partner.

This magazine ad I created in 2011 gives a good idea of what we were selling.



Representative photos from Railfan Weekends.





More Railfan Weekend photos: tutorials on taking night photos have long been on the RFW program. This example also shows one of the latter day features, the increasing use of actors and props. **(Right Photo, Walter Scriptunas II)**



Another of my projects was to create HO-scale models of Cass buildings using photos of actual walls glued to foam-core artist's board. These, of the Terry House and the old Cass shop, were made for display at the Cass Showcase. Inexpensive kits of these buildings have been offered for sale by MSR&LHA.



**Oil Headlight From Climax No. 9**

Forty-ton Climax, s/n 534, used by West Virginia Pulp & Paper Co. for construction trains and switching, was purchased used in 1913, renumbered from 6 to 9 in 1914, and sold in 1918. Interestingly, photos of the locomotive at the used equipment dealers before and after WVP&P ownership show a square-case headlight, but this round-case light was used during WVP&P service.



The strap hooks on the back of the casing permitted hanging the lamp on the water cistern fence when operating in reverse at night.

(Donated by Richard Sparks)

In 1970, I obtained the ancient kerosene headlight that had once graced GC&E Climax No.9 (at Cass from 1913-1918) from Catty Neighbors in trade for a painting. After it had hung on my wall for over 40 years, I donated it to MSR&LHA for display in the Cass Historical Museum – the place where I had gotten it!

## Loose Ends and Wrapping Things Up

I retired from MSR&LHA in 2013, and made my last trip (so far) to Cass in 2014. I'll be the first to admit, I no longer have an inside track on developments in West Virginia.

**How many Cass trips in all?** It's hard to say how many times I've traveled to Cass. I guess from 1969-1991, 4-6 trips per year; from 1992-1997, during the construction of Camp One and the Wye, 10-15 per year; from 1998 - 2013, 3-5 per year.



**Train Riding:** I actually burned out on Cass train riding around 1985. From then on, at most, I made one or two trips up the mountain per year, mainly to be with friends who wanted to ride. What really spoiled me was riding track speeders during the Camp One years. Riding to Bald Knob in reasonable comfort in under an hour sure beat hours of bumping along on a crowded train.

**Locomotive Purchases:** Shay 11 was not the only locomotive obtained for Cass by MSR&LHA. In 2008, the railroad asked us to procure a diesel locomotive for switching, the two (GE 45-ton and GE 65-ton center cabs) on the roster being considered as beyond repair. MSR&LHA spent \$33,000 on an operational GE 44-ton found in Ohio.

**Orphan Cars:** In 2007, original 1942 Mower camp car 419 was brought down from Camp One for repairs, mainly leaks around the windows and water damage. It was determined that it possibly needed a new side sill as well. Unfortunately, nobody in MSR&LHA volunteered to manage the project, despite the fact that it was relevant and doable. Admitting mission failure, the car was sheathed in plywood, painted, and so far, has been left to the elements on a siding in Cass. Here in the photo above its companion is the flat car MSR&LHA was going to rebuild in 1995, now much deteriorated after more than 20 years of additional weathering, and unlikely to do much more than continue to slowly disappear.

**The Climax Project:** The Climax rebuild team continued into 2015 when the operation of the Cass railroad properties were turned over by the state to a private (contract) operator. The team's estimate was the locomotive was about 85 percent done at that point. Unfortunately the new railroad management seems to want little to do with MSR&LHA volunteers. The Climax team was obligated cease its efforts and move out of the Killoran shop. Public information from the Durbin & Greenbrier Valley (D&GV) organization, now the Cass Scenic Railroad's management, is that they plan to eventually finish the locomotive.

**MSR&LHA in General:** Because of the tenuous relationship with the new railroad management, the organization has been forced into a hands-off status with respect to anything on railroad property – an identity crisis. They have been able to help the Park with town projects, but MSR&LHA always has been a railfan organization. It remains to be seen whether MSR&LHA will be able to retain a healthy long-term level of membership.