

**NWHS Mullens 2013 Convention**  
**Version 201301023.1**

**Bluefield to Twin Falls**

If travelling to the convention from Virginia and you wish to take a longer trip to railfan to Twin Falls, please use I-77 exit 1, US 52 West and proceed on US 52 West through Bluefield to the stoplight at the 'T' intersection with US 19 at the Bluefield yard.

This trip follows the former N&W mainline between Bluefield and Welch. Be aware, this route is longer and more rugged than the suggested route, it will take longer than expected due to slow traffic, sharp curves, speed limit restrictions, and any stops you may make. The mainline is busy, expect to see several trains along the way.

**Bluefield yard– Mile Post NX – US 52/19**

Bluefield was one of the two large coal marshalling yards for the N&W (the other being Williamson). NS today has removed many tracks; however, the coaling tower and lubritorium still remain (2013).

Travel south/west on US 19 along the yard into Virginia. Turn right on VA 102 at the stoplight and pass under the tracks.

Note: Gas is cheaper in Virginia than in West Virginia. Be sure to top off your tank!

**Yards, VA – Mile Post N 370.6 - VA 102**

Flat Top Yard, located on the VA/WV line, was used by the N&W to store coal for fill outs for Bluefield yard. NS continues to use the yard today. CR 102/5 is a public road that travels along the west side of the yard.

The road winds between VA and WV for the next several miles between Yards and Abbs Valley.

**Pocahontas Junction – Mile Post NX - VA 102**

The Pocahontas Branch (abandoned in place) leaves the mainline at Pocahontas Junction. This branch led to the town of Pocahontas and the famous mine there (see below).

**Bluestone Junction – Mile Post NX - VA 102**

The Bluestone Branch (abandoned in place) leaves the mainline at Bluestone Junction. This branch is an empire to itself, with several sub-branches. The location was also home to the electrification powerplant. Little can be seen at this location today.

A left turn at the cemetery at Abbs Valley continues on VA 102 which travels to Pocahontas, VA.

**Pocahontas VA – Mile Post PB 1.5 – VA 102**

Pocahontas is the location of the first coal mine on the N&W. Frederick Kimball travelled to Pocahontas to see the 18 foot exposed coal seam which resulted in the N&W New River extension being built.

Pocahontas was a thriving town in it's day, complete with an opera house that is still standing (2012). What is not standing anymore is the company store, the last part was taken down in 2012 even as preservationists were attempting to save it.

The Pocahontas mine, closed many years ago, is now an exhibition mine. Follow the signs and take the tour if you have time.

Turn around and return to Abbs Valley. Angle left just past the cemetery on the hill on the left to WV 120.

### **Coopers, WV – Mile Post - WV 120**

Coopers was named after John Cooper, the man who built Mill Creek Coal & Coke, one of the earliest mines on the N&W. The company store is still standing (2012) as well as John Cooper's home.

The N&W main crosses WV 120 on the Cooper bridge. This large, heavy structure was built as part of the new Elkhorn tunnel realignment in 1950 that eliminated the old electrified single track tunnel. The bridge also crosses the Bluestone branch (abandoned).

The mainline is not visible for several miles. Instead, WV 120 follows the Bluestone branch (abandoned).

### **Bramwell, WV –Mile Post - WV 120**

Bramwell was the home of many of the coal barons in the early 1900's. Supposedly in its' heyday it boasted the highest percentage of millionaires of any town in the United States. Look around, you can see many of these huge homes in town, most of which have been well-maintained. Be sure to stop in at the Corner Store if it is open for ice cream or drinks.

Bramwell is also home to a rebuilt station which houses a small museum and several cars including a Virginian Caboose,

Continue on WV 120 to US 52. Turn left on US 52 West to cross the mountain. No tracks will be visible, but going up you will be following roughly an abandoned branch to Buckeye, an abandoned mine. Near the top of the mountain is Pinnacle Rock State Park on the right, the smallest state park in WV. A trail leads to the top of the rock which provides a breathtaking panoramic view of the area south. The downward road follows another abandoned branch and the stone foundations of an abandoned tipple can still be seen.

### **Maybeury – Mile Post N 378.2 - US 52**

The town was named after two of the coal barons, May and Beury. At Maybeury the main line crosses the road. This through truss bridge is at the other end of the new Elkhorn tunnel realignment in 1950 that eliminated the old electrified single track tunnel.

Maybeury is the location where Y-5 No. 2092 fell off the old trestle and exploded in the town below, although no evidence of that disaster remains today. CR 10 and 10/1 turn left at this point and follow the main line towards Elkhorn tunnel although nothing much remains there to see. Maybeury was the home of one Elkhorn Coal and Coke, the company store was torn down in the 1990's. Stay on US 52 West.

### **Switchback – Mile Post N 379.7 – US 52**

Switchback is the location of the old Appalachian Power plant that can be seen in many old photos. The facility is still in existence (2012) but not used. It can still be seen on the north side of the tracks up on the hillside and can be accessed by Power House Road, CR 52/12.

### **Elkhorn – Mile Post– US 52**

Elkhorn is accessed on CR 52/11 and 52/26 from US 52. It is worth a drive down the road to see the Post office on the left, the water company on the right, and the gold-domed church across the tracks. Elkhorn was the home of both Crozier Coal and Coke and also Houston Coal & Coke. Little remains of the mines today.

### **Upland – Mile Post– US 52**

Upland was the home of Upland Coal and Coke. Little remains of the mine today.

### **Powhatan – Mile Post N 383.5 – US 52**

Powhatan was named after the father of Pocahontas. The town was the home of Powhatan Coal & Coke. Little remains of the mine today.

### **Kyle – Mile Post - US 52**

Kyle was the home of Lynchburg Coal & Coke. Little remains of the mine today.

### **Northfork - Mile Post N 384.3 - US 52**

Northfork is the location where the Northfork Branch (abandoned) left the mainline. This seven mile branch was home to many coal companies (Algoma, Gillian, Greenbrier, Algonquin, Ashland, United Pocahontas to name several but not all). Turn right on CR 17 to access the Northfork branch although little remains today other than the Ashland company store which was reopened to accomodate four-wheeler tourism a few years ago.

Northfork is also the location of one of O. Winston Link's popular photographs where he stood on the station platform and shot across the tracks. Sadly, nothing remains of the station or the buildings in his picture other than the back walls which are holding up the hillside.

**Keystone – Mile Post N 387.3 – US 52**

Keystone was the location of Keystone Coal & Coke. The preparation plant/tipple is still in operation although no coal is mined at this location. Unfortunately a very tall coal dust fence hides most of the tipple complex. The original stone powerhouse still stood before the fence was put up a few years ago.

**Eckman Yard — Mile Post NX = US 52**

Eckman yard was the original west end of electrification on the N&W until it was extended to Jaeger. The yard still remains and has been used for truck loading of coal. The last of the buildings were torn down in the late 1980's and early 1990's.

**Eckman– Mile Post N 388.3 – US 52**

Eckman is the location where a short spur to a mine leaves the mainline just past a double crossover. The town was home to Pulaski Iron & Coal and the company office building is still in existence (2012).

**Landgraf –Mile Post – US 52**

Landgraf was the home of Empire Coal & Coke and Vera Pocahontas Coal & Coke. A company store was torn down in the 1990's, but the brick office building on the right side of the road still stands and is a bed and breakfast (2012).

**Vivian Bottom – Mile Post N 390.8– US 52**

Vivian was home to a Pocahontas Fuel mine that went through several changes of ownership. The company office building still stood a few years ago. Take CR 52/3 down to the town, then turn right at the tracks.

**Kimball – Mile Post – US 52**

Kimball was named after Frederick Kimball, the popular president of the N&W and was the home of King Coal and Coke, Tidewater Coal and Coke, and Houston Coal & Coke.

**Carswell – Mike Post x - US 52**

Carswell was the location of a short spur up Carswell Hollow to a mine. The company office still stands on US 52 and was most recently the police station. Turn on CR 52/6 and 52/4 to see the building with three boxcar ends on the wall.

**Superior – Mile Post– US 52**

US 52 crosses over the main line as it passes through twin tunnels at Superior. It was home of Lake Superior Coal & Coke. The tipple is one of the two still in existence on the main line and has been in use recently.

**Maitland – Mile Post– US 52**

Maitland was the home of one of the Houston Collieries mines.

**Welch – Mile Post 398.1 – US 52**

Welch is the county seat of McDowell County. The county courthouse is the location that Sid Hatfield was gunned down for his part in the Matewan Massacre.

The N&W mainline tracks pass through the 'freight tunnel'. The passenger track passed through the town but is abandoned. The original station was located where the library is today. The old station burned down years ago, interestingly the fire department burned in the same fire.

The Tug Fork Branch leaves the mainline at Welch and heads south. This was a large branch that served the huge US Steel facility in Gary. Information on this branch is not part of this guide.

As the tracks take a short cut through the freight tunnel, it is not possible to follow the tracks. Continue on US 52 to Business/Alt US 52 through Welch. Turn right on WV 16 North. Be sure to take the right turn with WV 16 at the Hospital. (CR-7 continues the straight direction). There are no tracks along this road.

Stay on WV 16 to Pineville.

### **Pineville – MP 12.4 Guyandot River Branch of the Virginian**

The Town of Pineville was incorporated in 1907 and is the site of the Wyoming County courthouse. The Virginian freight house still stands in Pineville and is located at the road crossing near the city park/pool (2012).

Turn left on WV 10 at Pineville and then turn right on WV 97. Turn right on Bear Hole Road. It is 4.1 miles to Twin Falls Lodge into Twin Falls.

If you still have time, you can take a slightly longer route through Mullens to follow some of the ex-Virginian tracks.

### **Itmann - Guyandot River branch - Mile Post 4.0 - WV 16**

Itmann was named after Isaac T. Mann, the noted coal financier who lived in Bramwell. Itmann was home to a Pocahontas Coal Company mine. The impressive stone company store/company office building still stands. The Itmann mine closed in 1929. The mines reopened and a new tippel were built in the early fifties several miles downstream along the Guyandotte River.

### **Elmore Yard – WV 16**

Elmore Yard was the Virginian's main terminal of the New River Division and the dividing point between the third and fourth sub-divisions. The Guyandot River Branch to Gilbert begins at Elmore.

At Elmore, continue straight on WV 16 to Mullens. WV 10 turns right and crosses the yard on a bridge that provides a good view of the east end of the yard.

### **Mullens – Milepost 376.7 – WV 16 – Population in 1950 (3,470)**

Mullens was named for early settler Andrew Jackson Mullins. The name is spelled differently due to a mistake when applying for a post office. The city was incorporated in 1912.

The Feller Heritage Center is located on WV 10 on the right side of the road in front of the Mullens Opportunity Center. This is a reproduction of the Ellett building at the Va. Museum of Transportation and is home to a Virginian photo and relic collection.

At the point where WV 16 turns right to cross the tracks, go straight and stay on Moran Avenue.

Virginian class C-10 caboose No. 307 is on display along the former Virginian next to Rite Aid along Moran Avenue. This St. Louis Car Co. cab was built for use on the Norfolk Division and is home to the Mullens Caboose Museum.

From the caboose museum, you will have to turn left on Moran Avenue, then turn left on Second Street, cross the railroad tracks and then turn left on WV 54.

The west end of the receiving yard ends at a wye in Mullens. The wye is the location where the Winding Gulf Branch leaves the mainline at Gulf Junction. The Winding Gulf passenger trains made their Mullens station stop on the west leg of the wye. Mullens Shop was located within the wye.

The shop, locally known as the “motor barn,” was used to service the electrics and later diesels. It was demolished in 2011 after last being used by an industrial painting contractor.

#### **Mullens Tunnel - Mile Post 377.9 - WV 54**

Mullens Tunnel is 203 feet long and is unlined and cut through rock. The single track tunnel can easily be seen to the west of WV 54 just north of the first flashing light at Mullens.

#### **Harmco – Mile Post 378.1 – WV Route 54 North**

This was the location of mine belonging to the Mullens Smokeless Coal Company. This location had numerous names during the life of the Virginian. These names include Tracoal, Harmco, Nuriva and Norman.

#### **Caloric - Mile Post 378.6 - WV 54**

This one time coal camp was the site of the Smith Pocahontas Coal Company. The mine closed prior to WWII.

#### **Otsego - Mile Post 379.2 - WV 54**

Otsego was the location of mines and tipples of the Oglebay Norton Company.

#### **Otsego (Cedar Creek) Tunnel - Mile Post 379.2 - WV 54**

Otsego tunnel is 308 feet long. The tunnel was built for double track but the second track was never added. The tunnel can easily be seen to the west of WV54 by the old shopping center at Otsego.

### **Maben Tunnel - Mile Post 380.3 - WV 54**

Maben tunnel is 199 feet long and the north/west end is still timber lined (2010) and as such has guard rails in that end. Tunnel cannot be seen from WV 54 but is relatively accessible as there is a path down to a popular local "swimmin' hole" between the tunnel and Virwest. The tunnel is single track.

### **Virwest – Mile Post 380.4 – WV Route 54 North**

This is the east end of Maben siding and the junction with the Virginian and Western Branch. The V&W Branch was built in the early Twenties to serve the Raleigh-Wyoming Mining Company mine at Glen Rogers, WV. A water tank was located at Virwest that served both the branch and the mainline.

### **Maben - Mile Post 381.7 - WV 54**

*W.M. Ritter Lumber Company*

The W.M. Ritter Lumber Company, of Columbus, Ohio, operated a sawmill at Maben until the mid Forties and a narrow gauge railroad till the early Thirties. Standard gauge shay locomotives operated over the Virginian to access timber located along the Guyandot River Branch. W. M. Ritter No. 1, a 3-truck shay used at Maben, is now located at the Cass Scenic Railroad in Cass, WV, awaiting rebuilding. Georgia-Pacific later purchased the W.M. Ritter Lumber Company in 1960.

Maben is also the location of a passing siding that ends at Virwest, MP 380.4

Turn left on WV 97 at Maben

### **WV 97 Trestle - V&W Mile Post 2.9 - WV 97**

This 312' trestle spans WV 97 on the abandoned-in-place Virginia & Western (Glen Rogers) branch.

Continue on WV97 about a quarter of a mile past the Exxon Station where you will come to a STOP sign. Turn left onto Bear Hole Road. It is 4.1 miles to Twin Falls Lodge.