

**NWHS Mullens 2013 Convention
Version 201301023.1**

Princeton 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 460 West.

This trip follows the former VGN mainline between Princeton and Maben. 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. This mainline is not that busy, do not expect to see trains along the way. If you wish to see trains, it is suggested you take the Bluefield to Twin Falls route.

Princeton – Mile Post 340.2 – Population in 1950 (8,279)

Princeton, county seat of Mercer County, was incorporated in 1874. The city was named for Princeton, New Jersey, where General Hugh Mercer was killed during the Revolutionary War. General Mercer, namesake of Mercer County, was a native of Fredericksburg, VA.¹

Princeton was headquarters of the Virginian's New River Division and home of the main car and locomotive shops. During World War II, approximately 800 men and women from several surrounding West Virginia and Virginia counties were employed in Princeton Shops. From about 1938 until shortly after the VGN-N&W merger on December 1, 1959, thousands of hopper and other freight cars were built at the shops. With only 35 jobs remaining, Princeton Shops were officially closed about 15 years ago following nearly 90 years of service to VGN, N&W and the current Norfolk Southern railways. This shop was forever the largest business or industry in Princeton's and Mercer County's history, being beaten out in total number of employees after its closing by the Mercer County Board of Education. The second largest ever Princeton industry was the Maiden Form Brassiere Company, also now closed for several years! Sadly, most of the shops buildings are also now gone.

Princeton Railroad Museum – 99 Mercer Street – Phone (304) 487-5060 – Call ahead for hours

The Princeton Railroad Museum is housed in a replica of the original Princeton station/division offices. Many of the items in the museum came from the collection of the late Ken Coleman, a Virginian employee.

The former Railway Express Agency office stands next to the station. It was moved from its original location and is being restored for use as a farm museum.

The newest outdoor display is Virginian class C-10 caboose No. 308. This St. Louis Car Co. built cab was built for use on the New River Division. There are also two motor cars on display outdoors.

Take US 460 west to US 19. Turn right on US 19 north.

Kegley – Mile Post 345.0 – US 19 North

Kegley is a small unincorporated community and location of a siding. The siding is 6,350' long.

Turn right onto Kegley Trestle Road, CR 19/14, at the Kegley post office.

Black Lick Creek Trestle – Mile Post 344.4 – Kegley Trestle Road

This 910' long 18 span bridge is the tallest on the Virginian Railway, 200' above Black Lick Creek and CR 7/1.

¹ *West Virginia Blue Book 1953*, Page 668, State of West Virginia, Charleston, WV, 1953.

Return to US Route 19 on CR 19/14 and turn right.

Bridge over US Route 19 South – Mile Post 345.5.

This is a deck plate girder bridge over US Route 19. Kegley siding also crosses this bridge.

The Virginian will not be visible between Kegley and Matoaka.

Shawnee Lake - US 19/WV 10

Shawnee Lake was a recreation location in the last century. The rusted remains of several amusement rides such as a small Ferris wheel can still be seen.

Turn left on WV 10 at Shawnee Lake.

Matoaka – Mile Post 356.2 – WV 10 North – Population in 1950 (1,003)

Matoaka is another name for the Indian princess Pocahontas. The town was incorporated in 1912. The Mercer County town of Matoaka was located on the Virginian mainline and the N&W's Bluestone Branch and was an interchange point between the two roads. The east end of the double track from Elmore once ended near Matoaka at MX Tower. The Virginian depot still exists. This is the second Virginian depot at the site, the first wood structure having burned down. The current concrete block station has the distinction of being the last Virginian depot built.

Matoaka in recent years has also become known as a local speed trap. **Slow down in Matoaka!**

Giatto – N&W Right Fork of Widemouth Branch – WV 10 North

WV Route 10 crosses the abandoned-in-place N&W branch by bridge at this point. The Virginian mainline is still off to the left of the road.

N&W Right Fork of Widemouth Branch – Mile Post 17.8 – WV 10 North

WV Route 10 crosses over the N&W at this point. The junction with **Big Branch Spur** is visible from the left side (when driving north) of the bridge.

Hiawatha – N&W Right Fork of Widemouth Branch – Mile Post 19.0 – WV 10 North

The Ennis Coal Company operated a mine at Hiawatha.

Springton – N&W Right Fork of Widemouth Branch – Mile Post 20.0 – WV 10 North

The former Wenonah Spur crossed WV Route 10 at this point. Semet-Solvay operated a mine at Springton. Company store still stands (2012).

Arista – N&W Right Fork of Widemouth Branch – Mile Post 21.2 – WV 10 North

WV Route 10 crosses (crossing is paved over) the N&W at the foot of Herndon (Arista) Mountain. Arista was the site of Weyanoke Coal & Coke Company's Arista mine.

Mercer/Wyoming County Line – WV 10 North

The tracks will not be visible for several miles as we cross Herndon (Arista) Mountain.

The county line separating Mercer and Wyoming County is located at the top of the mountain. We leave the drainage of the Bluestone River and enter the drainage of the Guyandotte River.

Garwood – Mile Post 365.4 – WV 10 North

WV 10 crosses under the Virginian's Garwood trestle. This large 16 span curved bridge is 720 feet long and still has catenary poles attached. This trestle was double tracked although the second track has been removed. In fact, the VGN was double tracked up the hill from Elmore to Clark's Gap but the second track was removed in the late eighties.

Covel – Mile Post 366.4 – WV 10 North

The Covel Smokeless Coal Company was formed in 1919 with W.P. Tams, Jr. as president. In 1922 the company became part of Gulf Smokeless Coal Co. The mine closed in 1937.

The 738 foot trestle over Covel is 17 spans long and crosses the Left Fork of Gooney Otter Creek. This trestle was also double tracked although the second track has been removed.

Herndon – Mile Post 368.8 – WV 10 North

Herndon has been both a lumber and coal town. The Keys Fannin Lumber Company began operating in 1906 at Herndon. The company was reorganized as the Guyan Lumber Company in 1911. The company operated a narrow gauge line out of Herndon using Climax locomotives. The operation closed in 1930.

The Lamar Colliery Company operated the Herndon mine along with the Lamar mine at Clarks Gap/Algonquin.

There are several low trestles over WV10 and Gooney Otter Creek or Barkers Creek in this area.

Current east end of double track from Elmore – Mile Post 368.3 – WV 10 North

Norfolk Southern removed the second track between Herndon at Mile Post 368.3 and Algonquin at Mile Post 361.3. The second track was also removed between Weyanoke at Mile Post 358.1 to Matoaka.

Herndon Processing Company – WV 10 North

The current Herndon mining operation, located west of town, was inactive since the early 2000s and was torn down in 2012. This tippie was originally owned and operated by Eastern Associated Coal Corp. and dated to the 1960s so it was not actually a Virginian mine as it came later.

Alpoca – Mile Post 372.0 – WV 10 North

The name Alpoca was derived from Alpha Pocahontas Coal Co. Both the Alpha Pocahontas Coal Company and the Thermo Pocahontas Coal Company were located at Alpoca. Alpha Pocahontas closed prior to World War II. Later Gaston Coal Company operated mines at Alpoca.

Engineer J.L. Weaver was killed at Alpoca on April 13, 1932 when he was knocked from his engine into Barkers Creek. Weaver had been the engineer of the eastbound coal train that struck train No. 3 on May 1927 at Ingleside, WV killing the engineer and fireman of the passenger train.

Deerfield – Mile Post 373.0 – WV 10 North

American Coal Company was located at Deerfield. The shop buildings are still in existence but the tippie is gone.

Tralee – Mile Post 373.9 – WV 10 North

Former mine operated by the Semet-Solvay Division of Allied Chemical and Dye Corp.

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 south 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 replica of the Ellett station 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

The unlined Mullens tunnel is cut through rock and is 203 feet long. 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 tipple belonging to the Oglebay Norton Company.

Otsego 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 Rodgers) 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.