

B&O Lost Division Mountain Branch

Replacing a Switch at Megantown

By Bob Hanna

Had a few derailments when switching the Witteborg Wonder Works during the past few OP sessions. It is an old spur track, it's not supposed to be in first class shape, and perhaps it was just a finicky car. Or maybe the ground throw switch linkage just needs some adjustment. But since the derailments were getting more frequent, time to have the maintenance crew take a look at it.

When the maintenance crew went to fix it, they found that adjusting the ground throw linkages was not going to do the job. The switch was in bad shape and needed to be replaced. (Gee, it was only 40+ years old and had been in three previous layouts, so it has lived a good long life considering its travels.) Quickly looking for a # 4 right hand switch in the spare track box, found one! A Peco no less! That will be an upgrade from the old Atlas



switch. And no ground throw needed either. So I laid the new switch on top of the track and marked where to cut the rails to fit it in. Scraped the ballast away from the cut marks and using the rail nippers, cut the rails. Then used a chisel to break the old switch out of the ballast. With the switch removed, started scraping off the ballast with a

chisel, and used a vacuum cleaner to clear out all the debris. Now we have a clear, clean area in which to lay in the new switch. Worked on the rail ends next, with a screwdriver to scrape out any ballast that was in the way and a razor blade to cut the spike plates off the ties so new rail joiners could be slid on.

Putting down the new switch, the new rail joiners slid right on and we were ready for testing. Ran the engine and offending car in and out of the siding several times without any derailments or problems. Fixed! Or at least it is mechanically fixed, so the Witteborg Wonder Works could still be serviced.

Time to go get the scenery supply box off the shelf! No matching cinder ballast to be found, but there is some light grey with a few cinders mixed in that should do. Besides there hasn't been a steam engine in these parts for years, so even the prototype railroad wouldn't have cinders for ballast anymore either. Carefully applying a little white glue between the ties, (Keep Away From The Switch Points!) applied the gray ballast and then put on some diluted white glue on



with an eye dropper to hold the ballast down. Also added a little Woodland Scenic's mixed turf along the right of way and to cover where the ground throw had been. And that's it for now! We are not done yet, still need to paint the rails so they match the rest of the rails in Megantown. But let's let the glue dry over night so the water based rail paint I use doesn't run down into the wet ballast. End of day 1!

The next day I got out the burnt umber paint and a small paint brush. Squirted some paint onto the plastic lid of an old butter container, and went to work painting the rails to take the shine off the sides. Was careful not to get any on the switch points where it makes electrical contact. Wiped the top of the rails off, and called it a day, let the paint dry. End of day 2!

On the third day, when the paint dried, went over the rails with an abrasive track cleaning bar, (i.e. Bright Boy), to remove any stray paint. Tested it again just to be sure the glue had not gotten into the movable parts of the switch, and it worked fine. The Witteborg Wonder Works is once again shipping its products out to the world on the B&O Lost Division!

