

B&O Lost Division Grafton Yard – One Step Further.

Grafton Yard originally started as a staging yard on my layout. One end was Grafton, the other was Cumberland. Five through tracks and one short stub track, which usually holds a local passenger train. But as operations increased, Van Doren got too crowded to handle the trains for the Mountain Branch. We needed more yard tracks! There was no place to expand the yard at Van Doren, so the decision was made to handle all trains for the Mountain Branch out of Grafton Yard.

This made for a little longer run and worked out pretty good. And it added some interesting operations too, in that the Mountain Branch trains would now have to cross the B&O Main Line, and of course, the main line trains would have superiority. So you had to wait until it was clear to cross. (I keep two trains running on the double track main line, one slow east bound freight and a fast west bound freight.)

At first I made up all Mountain Branch trains and staged them in Grafton Yard. But as operations grew, we needed more than just 5 trains going up and down the mountain. Operators would make up their own trains and, with prodding, kept the yard in fair order. As more operators showed up each month, we began to see the need for a yard crew at Grafton. Needed somebody to make up the trains and keep a track open for the next train coming into the yard. They would also communicate with the Van Doren crew to coordinate so all trains coming and going went by smoothly.

But there was another aspect of yard work that is missing. What happens to the cars brought into Grafton Yard? It was kind of implied that these cars went on to other parts of the B&O Lost Division and beyond, (not modeled). But we just said that the second shift crew took care of that and ended the OP session there.

It was handy to do it that way, as all cars and car cards were right there in one place, Grafton Yard. But soon you start to see the same old cars going to the same old places.

Why not have the main line trains coming into the yard once a session to drop off and pick up cars? The slow freight has about 12 cars on it, which is just the number of cars that a Grafton Yard track can handle. So I can give the yard crew a list of cars that I want to continue

east on the slow freight. Special instructions to the Grafton Yard Crew are that, here are 12 cars that are coming into your yard, group them together on track 2 and clear track 1 or 6, (the longest), for an arriving slow freight. The yard crew would usually have it ready close to the end of the OP session, sometimes having to wait for that last train to come in with cars for track 2. But once in and on track 2, then we can bring the slow freight into Grafton Yard on track 1. The yard switcher cuts off the caboose and spots it onto the cars on track 2, while the road engines cut off from their train and couple onto the cars on track 2. Then off they go! We have 12 fresh cars for the next OP session and 12 cars that we just used are now in “rolling storage” out on the main line.

The fast west bound train can get in on the act too. It is usually a string of reefer cars. Reefers can be spotted at the canning plant in Jonesville or at any team track on the Mountain Branch. But I don't have this worked into the operating scheme just yet. The idea is to have the fast train stop on the main at the old Cumberland end of the yard, MX Tower. There would be 3 or so empty reefers on the end of one of the yard tracks for them to pick up. They would then spot 3 or more full reefers into the yard for delivery during the current OP session. This would need to occur early in the OP session in order to have time to get them delivered. Of course as the fast train would have to cross the east bound main to get into the yard, they would have to watch for the slow east bound freight and clear, so as not to stop it. I would expect them to get stuck in the yard waiting for the slow east bound train to go by. Could be neat! Have done it once and it went well.

But what about freight cars headed west or reefers going east? No problem, the second shift crew will handle it!