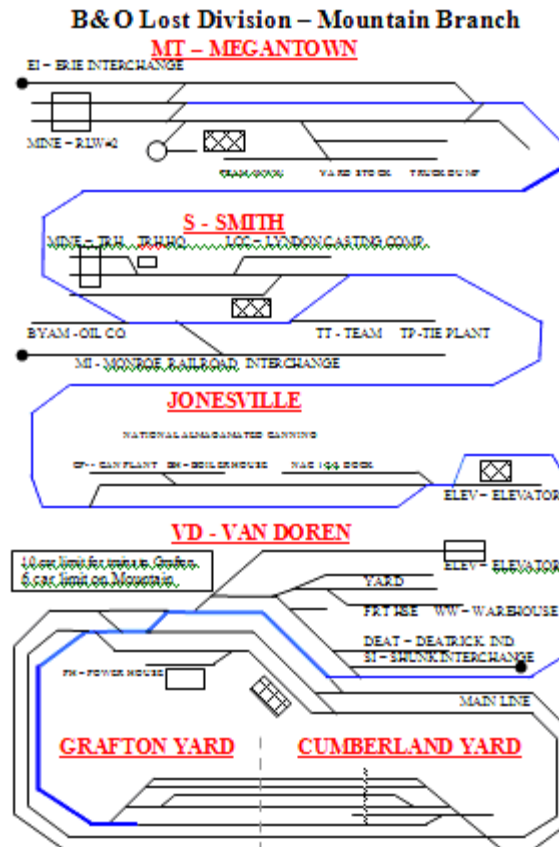


B&O Lost Division - Grafton Yard Master

By Bob Hanna

The Grafton Yard Master is a relatively new position for the B&O Lost Division.

Originally Grafton was just a staging yard until all trains for the Mountain Branch were moved there from Van Doren. Then as time went on it was up to the train crews to make up their own trains in Grafton Yard. Just a few rules, 6 cars max on the Mountain Branch, and 10 cars between Grafton and Van Doren. Pick any 6 cars for Jonesville, Smith or Megantown and if there are cars for Van Doren, put up to 4 of them on the rear of the train to be dropped off before going up the mountain. Caboose on the back, engine on the front, and there you have your train ready to depart. This worked well for many years, but things do change. With increased traffic coming off the mountain, more trains were needed. And a special turn to switch the canning plant in Jonesville was needed too. (They are our best customer!)



Except for the daily local passenger train, which lays over on the stub track 5 at Cumberland Yard, we generally call all of yard Grafton Yard now. That is because the main line trains have started stopping in Grafton Yard, so a Yard Master was definitely needed! Usually the main line trains consist of just two trains, one in each direction, running on the main line loops which the Mountain Branch has to cross. And main line trains do have priority over Mountain Branch trains, so you can see the purpose they originally served, that of providing heavy main line traffic that would cause delays to the Mountain Branch trains. Westbound is a fast freight of reefers and Eastbound is a slow mixed freight of 12-13 cars.

With the canning plant at Jonesville, it made sense that the fast freight would need to drop off reefers at Grafton Yard, so the Jonesville turn could deliver them. And there would be empty reefers to be picked up and head back. So, printed up four waybills for the car cards that say "Grafton Yard WestBound". Three usually go on the reefers at the canning plant, and a fourth that is put on any reefer at the freight house, team track or on the interchange. Once the yard master has them staged for pickup at the west end of the

yard, the fast freight makes a quick stop, picks up the four empties and drops four loaded reefers off for delivery. The yard master needs to accomplish this early in the OP session so the reefers have time to be delivered. So this is another reason to have a Grafton Yard Master position.

Also the slow freight usually ends the session by pulling into Grafton Yard, dropping most all of its cars, 12-13, and picking up cars that are headed East. Printed up 13 waybills that say "Grafton Yard EastBound". At first it was up to the Grafton Yard Master to see that these cars all got switched onto a track for the Eastbound slow freight to pick up. Even harder was that the Yard master would have to have a yard track clear for the slow freight to come in on! After one harried op session we decided that the train crews needed to help, so we made a rule that the train crews had to spot all eastbound cars from their train onto track one or two, per the yard master's discretion, (as those are tracks long enough to hold that many cars). And recommended that train crews keep all "Grafton Yard EastBound" cars at the front of their train, to make it easier for them to switch the cars over to track one or two, as the yard lead on that end is rather short. This has worked well! When all 12-13 cars are together on either track 1 or 2, the yard switcher positions itself on the short yard lead and the slow freight enters the yard. The yard switcher moves the caboose from the train, putting it onto the back of the eastbound cars, while the slow freight's engines are cut off the train and backed onto the waiting eastbound cars. Pump up the brake line air pressure and it's ready to depart Grafton yard! This brings in 12-13 different cars to be delivered on the Mountain Branch, and take the same number of cars out of circulation for a while. This way you are not delivering the same cars every session. It helps to mix things up a bit.

A yard is always busy, slammed, at the start of an OP session. To ease this a bit, the night shift usually has one train made up and ready to depart. Then to give the yard



master is bit more time to make up some trains, I have a crew lay over at Megantown, so they can start from there, (after the morning passenger local departs of course). They do some switching to get the 3 loaded coal hoppers from the truck dump, that are going to the powerhouse at Van Doren. They can fill out the rest of their train to the 6 car maximum with cars off the interchange that are going to the town of Smith. At

Smith, the local switcher may have additional coal that is headed to the powerhouse. Or if not, any 3 cars going to Van Doren or Grafton Yard will do. At Van Doren they drop all cars. There are empty hoppers here that need to be delivered back up the mountain to the mines. The crew picks them up and heads back up the mountain. This way the train does not need to go into Grafton Yard and gives the yard master a bit more time to get trains made up in the yard at the start of the OP session.

As Grafton Yard began its life as a staging yard, Engine facilities were never considered there. And it is unlikely that it ever will have them as any proposed facilities either shorten the yard tracks or require removing structural supports for the upper level. Being an island type of layout, any additions to the layout would jut out and block the aisle which is considered undesirable. Besides, Van Doren has sand, water, coal and diesel fuel, so we will just say that the engines are taken care of there while waiting to cross the main line on their way to Grafton Yard. Another rule is that any train coming into Grafton Yard needs to bring its engine back to the caboose so it is ready to head back out if called upon.



We almost have this Grafton Yard Master position tuned into the OP session so we will have to see what the next change will be on the B&O Lost Division.