

Kentucky Coal

Guest Writer: Everett Young

The 1544-foot long tunnel on the John's Creek extension at the head of Stonecoal Creek is about half bored. The steel girder overpass at Coal Run over US-Rt. 23 is almost completed, and the excavation for the two 110 car sidings and river fill is almost finished. I understand the excavation will be finished by next summer.

A large tippie and preparation plant being built at East Weeksbury, will breathe life back into a weed-grown, two-mile segment of the Long Fork Subdivision. Much of this area was deepmined years ago by the Koppers Company, which owned much stock in the Virginian Railway. This new firm, the Bailey Mining Company, also plans to deep mine as well as strip mine. (The only service on the Long Fork Subdivision above Clear Creek Junction presently is a small tippie operated by the same company at Melvin.) Hopefully this will generate more activity for the scenic portion just south of Hi-Hat, where three tunnels are situated very close together. Industrial Railroad Track Builders, Inc., of Louisville, has been working the past two months replacing ties and rebuilding the tippie tracks.

In relation to developments on the Dawkins Subdivision, one or more yard tracks are to be laid at Paintsville, Kentucky. Unfortunately, this will spell the end for the beautiful brick depot at Paintsville, and possibly part of the engine terminal. I happened to be at the engine terminal there a while ago and noticed, or rather was floored by, the presence of a Western Maryland SD30, #7433.

While waiting at "NC" Cabin (at Ashland) on June 4, to shoot the return trip of the *Chessie Steam Special*, a coal train came out of "RU" [at the east end of the Russell, Kentucky, yard], and headed toward the Lexington Subdivision. I elected to forget the steamer and follow the Extra-#8109, with a U25B/U23B/U25B lashup (#8109, 2309, 2329, 8112), thinking that coal trains are not all that common on the Lexington line. I think I made the right decision. The 51-car train was reduced to 36 cars at Aden. After making a charge up to Corey, KY, they set off half of the train for the final mile of 2.67% grade to Mountain Top. This was done rather quickly, and soon the units were returning for the other half. We hurried ahead to Olive Hill, and got them again as the operator handed up orders. Extra #4160 (with 4160, 4069, 4274, 8103 and 6022) was waiting there on the passing siding with 85 cars, mostly coal empties and chemical cars (the dangerous kind), in the late afternoon shadows. The coal train and empties were a pleasant surprise. Keep in mind that a train of any heavy tonnage has to double [cut the train in two sections and make two runs] from Corey Hill up to the top. I had thought that this took place from Aden—but not so. I just wish the pusher job was still on.

More Coal

According to an Associated Press article in the *Williamson* (WV) *Daily News*, of July 7, the Island Creek Coal Company recently signed a contract with the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) to deliver 14.2 million tons of low sulphur coal over the next ten years. This contract calls for about ten million tons to come from N&W mines in Martin County, Kentucky, and the remaining four-million to come from the Holden, WV, operations in C&O's Logan District. This contract, along with a large order for Clinchfield Coal Corporation coal, came as a result

of the drastic slump in the export coal market suffered by both companies after the prolonged strike last winter. According to the paper, all of the tonnage of both contracts is destined for TVA's Shawnee power plant near Paducah, Kentucky. Hopefully, all of Holden's share and much or most of Martin County's tonnage will be moved over the C&O via Louisville. All of the Clinchfield Coal Corporation's production will undoubtedly move out of southwest Virginia via the Clinchfield, N&W and L&N.

Coal trains have frequently been seen during the past few months operating out the Lexington Subdivision. Presumably, much of this coal is now going to a power plant at Burgin, located below Lexington on the Southern Railway.

Shelby Gray?

It took me by complete surprise last August to see that the C&O has repainted the yard office at Shelby, Kentucky, from dingy white to battleship gray. The yard tracks are now visibly numbered, with the use of small metal fins bolted to the switch ties. The fins are painted silver with raised black numbers.

Also, the Kentucky Department of Transportation has resurfaced the road into Shelby, so you don't need four-wheel drive to get to the yard.

Pikeville Project

Track work through the Pikeville, Kentucky "Cut-thru" project was completed by late Friday afternoon, July 7. After the contractors (Industrial Railroad Track Builders, Inc.) from Louisville, had made the finishing touches, C&O #97 was waiting to tiptoe slowly through the 3400-foot-long, man-made gorge. Several dignitaries and local Chessie officials, including Pikeville Mayor William C. Hambley, County Judge (and Society member) Wayne T. Rutherford, and Chessie road foreman Paul Kelly made the inaugural run on the "front porch" of #7536/2329/3309/ and a GP9. This brought to an end regular through-train service in Pikeville. A switch was installed at the south (or east) end of the cut to permit local service. The old mainline at the north (west) end of the cut was severed and a connection installed to the new line. As I drove home later, I noticed that the signals were turned off—a sight I had never seen here.

Fostoria Coal

The C&O in Fostoria, Ohio, is fairly busy with one or two yard crews working each shift. An average of five 145-car coal trains terminate here weekly. These are set out in the yard on the center siding north of the depot—into the B&O yard. Most of these crews turn and head back to Columbus. Before the C&O/B&O affiliation, it was thought that C&O crews would operate coal trains from here onto the B&O. This did not materialize, although the B&O operates several freights daily between Willard and Walbridge.