

## **RIDING THE HOCKING VALLEY RAILROAD'S C&O 5833**

By

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On Sunday morning after this year's Summerrail, which if you did not attend you missed some great train programs and train watching, Mary Ann and I headed for Nelsonville, Ohio and the Hocking Valley Scenic railroad (HVSr). The HVSr traces its heritage back to 1864 and the Mineral Railroad which proposed to build southeast from Columbus, Ohio, for the coal fields around Athens, Ohio. In 1867 the Mineral Railroad became the Columbus & Hocking Valley Railroad (C&HV) and began to laying track in the spring of 1867. In 1868 C&HV track reached Canal Winchester, Ohio and in 1869 Lancaster, Ohio. On 17 August 1869 the first C&HV train reached Nelsonville, but it was not until August 1870 that train service was available to Athens. In August 1887 with the decision to build north from Columbus to Toledo, Ohio the C&HV became the Columbus Hocking Valley & Toledo Railway CHV&T). In February 1899 the CHV&T became the Hocking Valley Railroad (HVRR). The HVRR provided through train service within the state of Ohio from Toledo on Lake Erie to Pomeroy, Ohio, on the Ohio River. Then in May 1930 HVRR was merged into the Chesapeake & Ohio Railway (C&O) becoming the C&O's Hocking Valley Division. Depletion of minable coal within the area stating in the 1940s lessened the need for rail service in the area. In December 1949 C&O ended passenger train service on the Hocking Valley Division and in the 1970s began to abandon sections of Hocking Valley Division Track. In 1971, C&O became part of the Chessie System and wholesale abandonment of the Hocking Valley Division began. In 2018, only the track from Columbus to Nelsonville remain in place.

In 1972, in order to preserve part of the HVRR the Hocking Valley Scenic Railway (HVSr) was formed with the mission of purchasing a portion of the old HVRR track. In 2018 HVSr owns 12 miles of track that run from Nelsonville north to Logan, Ohio. HVSr offers two trains rides on Saturday and Sunday during the Spring/Summer/Fall seasons. These rides are a 12-mile round trip at Noon from Nelsonville to Haydenville, Ohio, and back with a stop at Nelsonville Pioneer Village and at 24-mile round trip at 2:30 PM from Nelsonville to Logan, Ohio, and back.

Due to wanting to get back home to Frankfort, Kentucky, while it was still light we bought tickets for the noon train ride. The ticket sales room is not in the gift shop but across the track at the depot. Mary Ann seeing that C&O 5833, a GP7, would be pulling the train asked if we could get a cab ride. The ticket agent said she needed to ask the Engineer, so off she went to find him. The next thing I knew was we were getting a cab ride. Mary Ann had used charm and the fact that I was a Conductor and she a car host at the Bluegrass Railroad Museum. Our locomotive crew consisted of Chris Hartley as engineer and Tyler Martin as firemen. Two persons are needed in the cab as the GP7's high nose prevents the engineer from having an all-around view of the track ahead. C&O 5833 is ex Chicago, South Shore & South Bend Railroad number 1508.

We left the the Depot only one minute late and at 10 miles per hour headed north for Haydenville. For most of our trip the remains of the Hocking Valley Canal were on our right and

the Hocking River on our left. However outside of Haydenville we crossed over the Hocking River on a steel bridge and pulled into Haydenville. At a round-a-round siding the train was parked. Tyler got off the train to uncouple the locomotive and throw the switches for us to run-around the train. Tyler then rode on the locomotive steps as we went down the siding to the next switch. At the switch he got off and threw the switch to enter the mainline. Once we were on the mainline and clear of the switch Tyler aligned it to the mainline and we returned to couple to our train. Both uncoupling and coupling were done with three step protection which Mary Ann insured Chris was providing. She had learned about three step protections while riding in the cab at Bluegrass Railroad Museum.

With our locomotive now facing Nelsonville we were off for Hocking College and its Robbins Crossing Pioneer Village. The Robbins Crossing Pioneer Village is located .5 miles south of the depot, just pass the HVSR's Shops. Speed on the college campus is 5 Miles-per-hour. We did a 20-minute lay over at the Pioneer Village so the passenger could explore the village's houses. With our passengers reloaded we shoved back to the depot with Tyler Martin on the front of the train calling out via radio distance to crossings and track speed restrictions to Chris, the engineer. We were back to the depot at 1:45.

After thanking Chris and Tyler for the cab ride it was off to the Ticket Office to get permission to visit the HVSR Shops. This was granted. Reaching the Shops was a bit of a challenge but I soon navigated the car to the railyard. Mary Ann opted to remain in the car when we got to the Shops but I got out to explore. After being challenged by one of the HVSR's members and after informing him I had permission to visit I was invited into the Shop. Here I was given a tour of HVSR's 1920 0-6-0 Baldwin steam locomotive Number 3, ex Ohio Power Company, that was undergoing maintenance. I turned down an offer to climb up into the smoke box. I was told that Number 3 would be ready for pulling the Santa Train in December. Shopped with Number 3 was Baldwin-Lima-Hamilton RS-4-TC number 4005, obtained from the United States Air Force and an EMD GP10 built by the Illinois Central shop at Paducah, Kentucky, as Illinois Central Gulf number 8307, from an Illinois Central GP 9 Number 9307.

Within the HVSR Shop Yard were a number of fascinating freight and work cars. The ones that got my attention were three pieces of C&O maintenance-of-way equipment: C&O 960400 a diesel-powered crane, C&O 910006 a Chessie painted boxcar, and C&O 912352 a flatcar. At 3:45 PM my further exploring of the HVSR yard was cut short by the curse of the modern age, the cell phone, Mary Ann was at the other end of the phone circuit and she informed me my fun time was over it was time to head home. After a walk back to the Shop to inform the crew I was leaving the property I got in the car and we headed for home. Supper was some good German food and beer at the Hofbraughaus House in Newport, Kentucky.



C&O 5833 at the Nelsonville Depot



The bridge over the Hocking River. In the 1940s this bridge carried double track





Tyler Martin throwing the switch



Mary Ann making sure Chris Hartley has the locomotive in Three Step Protection while Tyler Martin throws the switch.





At the Haydenville lumber yard



Mary Ann, in the Conductor seat, supervising the locomotive crew to make sure they call all crossings and switch alignments.





Returning to the Nelsonville depot



The HVSR Shops at Nelsonville from the cab of C&O 5833





HVSr Baldwin #3 being shopped



I could see the smokebox just as well from the ground as in it.



The Baldwin-Lima-Hamilton RS-4-TC



The flatcar in the foreground was being converted into an open-air car. In the background is number 701 a GP 10, ex ICG 8307.





C&O 910006 in Chessie paint



C&O 960400 a diesel-powered crane with her idler car.