

A VISIT TO THE HEAVENLY HILLTOP RAILROAD

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In October 2018, Mary Ann and I were invited to attend an operating session at the Heavenly Hilltop Railroad (HHRR). This 7.5-inch gauge, 1,500-foot long railroad is located 7-miles north of Stamping Ground, Kentucky, on the top of a hill. There is balloon track at both ends of the line and three passing sidings in between. At the far end of the line, it crosses a ravine on a 30-foot long, 20-foot high trestle before running through a 20-foot long tunnel. The operating crew of HHRR run both steam and diesel (gasoline powered) locomotives. The day we were there they were operating two steam locomotives, Rio Grande 463 and Southern Kentucky 4841, and two diesel locomotives, Chessie System C&O 6148 and Southern Railway CNO&TP 3358.

Being a Chessie fan, as far as I was concerned the piece de résistance of the locomotives operated that day was Chessie System C&O 6148. Who would want to ride behind steam when they could ride behind C&O 6148? In truth, Mary Ann and I rode in back of all four locomotives, each pulling two to six passengers. We were there for the total operating session from 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM. All I can say is someone sped up the clock that day as it seemed we had only been there an hour when it was 2:00 PM and HHRR began to close down.

Youtube has a number of videos of train action on the HHRR.



C&O 6148 leaving the station yard for its first run of the day. Mary Ann is sitting on the front seat at the rear of train.



C&O 6148 is leaving the trestle and heading for the 20-foot long tunnel.



HHRR's coal-fired Southern Kentucky Railroad 4-6-4 is in the process of being fired up for the day's run. One of the great truisms of railroad operations was on display at HHRR that morning. It took an hour to get the steam locomotives up to working steam pressure so they could run over the track. However, the diesel locomotives were brought out of the car barn, started up, and down the track you went.



Rio Grande 463 has just completed her safety checks and is preparing to head to the depot to take on board her first passengers of the day.



Rio Grande 463 is preparing to leave the station on its first run of the day. Mary Ann is giving the Engineer his instructions for his run over the line: Observe the speed limits and the block signals, operate the throttle and brakes smoothly, look forward at all times.



Mary Ann riding behind CNO&TP 3358. The train is coming into the yard after completing its round-trip run.



Some of the HHRR staff tried, with no success, to get Mary Ann to reenact the opening scene from Petticoat Junction.