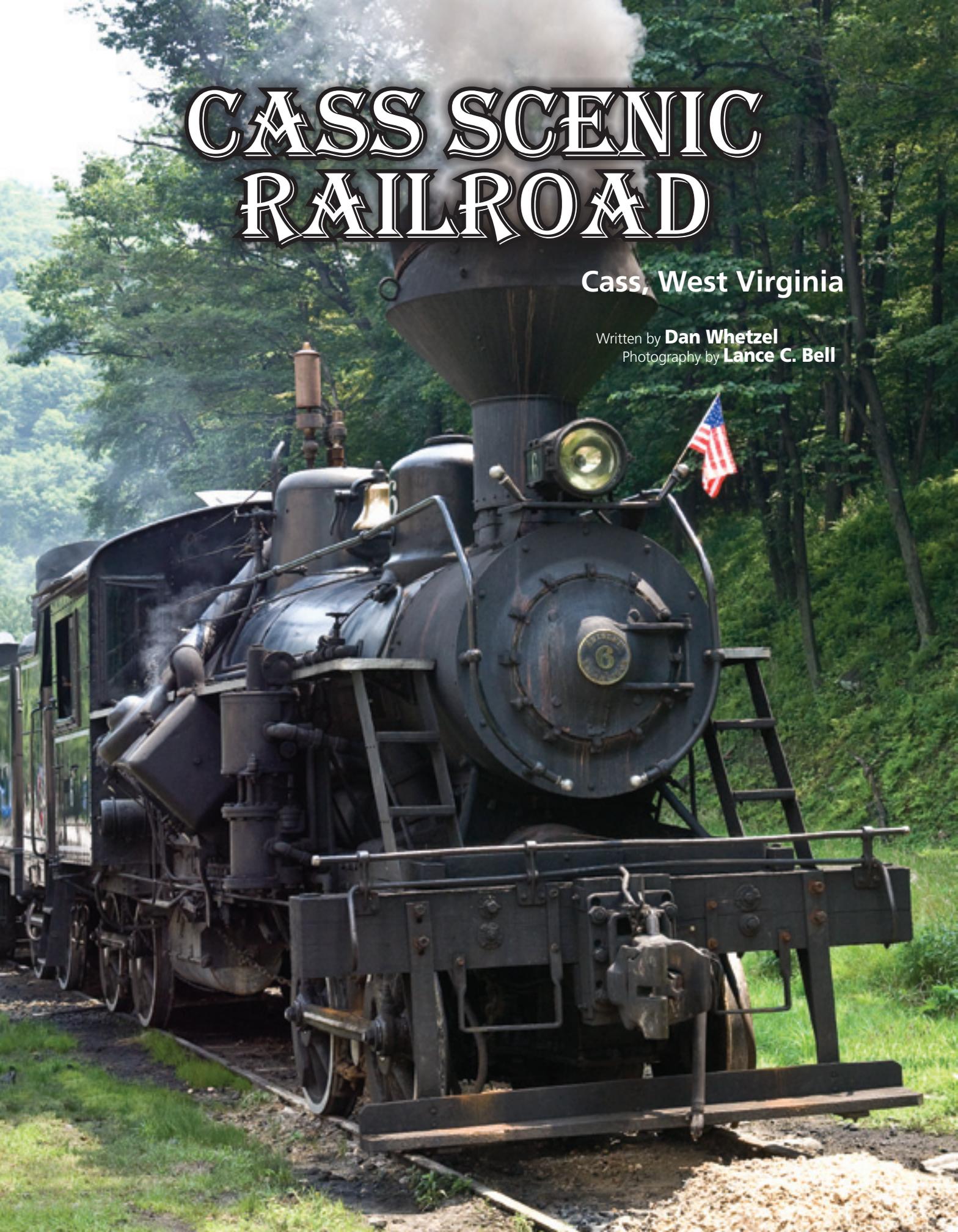


CASS SCENIC RAILROAD

Cass, West Virginia

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Facing page: Cass Scenic Railroad's Heisler #6 departs from the depot for its journey to Whitaker Station. The four mile excursion to the station provides passengers with views of the wilderness area and a historical logging camp that was recreated by volunteers of the Mountain State Railroad and Logging Historical Association. The Heisler locomotive was built in 1929 for service in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, and added to the Cass collection in 1968.

Above: Cass #11's whistle receives an adjustment before service to Bald Knob. The Shay locomotive originally saw service in Feather Falls, California, and was known as Feather River #3. The locomotive was added to the Cass collection in 1997 and renumbered.

All aboard!

The familiar railroad call rings out today just as it did a century ago deep in the forest of the Appalachian Mountains. Passengers responding to the conductor's call are not imagining historic surroundings, a vast wilderness area, or the sights and sounds of rail workers preparing the steam-driven Shay locomotive, for an arduous journey to the mountain top — not in this Appalachian town. Virtually every sight and sound that was typical in 1910 can be experienced at Cass, West Virginia, in 2010. The Cass Scenic Railroad offers an authentic logging railroad experience in a turn of the 20th century company town.

The town of Cass, West Virginia, is the result of West Virginia Pulp and Paper's (WVP&P) quest to access vast tracts of timber for its pulp processing plant. The lumbermen realized the value of the sparsely populated and rugged mountains, so a worker's camp was established in 1900 at Leatherbark Creek, a site that would later become

the location of the Cass Locomotive Shops. The workers blazed a rail bed from the camp into the forest at grades of up to 11%; this required laying tracks around ridges, completing two switchbacks to gain attitude, and enduring rugged living conditions. In 1901, a small town called Spruce was established in the forest above the original camp to host workers and their families. As the railroad pushed forward, the old town was moved to a new location also called Spruce. For convenience sake, the first camp was thereafter referred to as Old Spruce. At nearly 4,000 feet above sea level, the new town of Spruce became one of the highest towns on the eastern seaboard. From that location, the railroad eventually built 82 miles of mainline track and additional miles of branch lines that covered the region and provided access to the virgin forest. As the railroad became established, cut timber was hauled down the mountain to the town of Cass, where large pulp and planing mills operated six days per week.



Shay locomotives are known for their ability to climb steep grades and successfully navigate sharp curves. The Shay's performance was made possible by a system of vertical cylinders, a crankshaft, and geared trucks that are shown in this view of Cass #11.

The town of Cass, named after Joseph K. Cass, Chairman of the Board of West Virginia Pulp and Paper Company, was established to support the timber and sawmill operations that were constructed on the site. According to railroad historian, Roy Clarkson, the company employed between 2,500 and 3,000 workers, so housing and a company store were necessary in the remote location. The Pocahontas Supply Company store, small dwellings, and other necessary structures were built by the company and remain nearly the same as they appeared in 1910. Today, the railroad and town are part of the West Virginia State Park system, and visitors are welcome to tour the community and lodge in a company house.

To those interested in railroad history, the town of Cass is synonymous with the workhorse locomotive designed by Ephraim Shay in the 19th century—the Shay Locomotive. Nowhere else in the United States can visitors routinely see so many Shay's under steam and on display at the same time. Logging operations called for a rugged locomotive that could handle steep grades, navigate sharp turns, and

maintain reliability. Shay's design, featuring distinctive side-mounted drive shafts, met the demands of Cass' loggers and other timbering operators around the United States and world. Shay Numbers 2, 4, 5, 6, and 11 are included in the Cass collection of logging locomotives. Shay Number 6 is especially significant because it was the last one to be manufactured. Placed into service in 1945, "Big 6" was the second largest Shay ever built and the largest one in existence today. Originally purchased by the Western Maryland Railway for service in the rugged region of the upper North Branch of the Potomac River, Number 6 arrived in Cass in 1981; visitors can get a close-up view of its rugged exterior and distinctive side rod action. Competitors of the Shay locomotive during the peak of Appalachian logging operations, the Climax and Heisler, are also on the roster of Cass locomotives. The combination of authentic locomotives in an historic logging community makes Cass unique.

A large diorama is also offered for visitors to enjoy. The display is called the Showcase at Cass Scenic Railroad

and features an HO scale layout of the town as it appeared in 1910, the height of West Virginia Pulp and Paper's operations in the region. Bruce Elliott, Manager of the Showcase and Cass Scenic Railroad enthusiast, provides the historical narrative that accompanies the diorama. Bruce also provides a perspective on the town where he lives. "The town and railroad are tied together. Many visitors come to ride the train and then learn about the town after they are here. Cass is a destination where people come to relax, to escape from the business of everyday life; it is very tranquil." In referring to the railroad operations, Bruce comments, "In 2008 we had six steam locomotives under power and operating at the same time. Fifty years ago that would have been a challenge; in the 21st century, it is really unusual."

Keeping steam locomotives under power is a labor intensive task that requires specialized skills. Railroad employees do not enjoy the convenience of ordering spare parts from online catalogs or visiting nearby showrooms to purchase new ones. Machinists restore, maintain, and repair the roster of steam powered locomotives in a shop that is within walking distance of the town. The skills on display at the Cass Locomotive Shops span three centuries of time and are available for observation during guided tours.

Other activities and offerings include the Cass Museum, a children's playground, self guided tours of Cass, interpretive tours of the mill site, and meals at the Last Run Restaurant. Special train events include the Rail Fan weekend in May, Trout Specials for fishermen in April and May, Fiddles and Vittles and Murder Mystery trains throughout the rail season. Regularly scheduled daily trains offer service to Whittaker Station and Bald Knob, while Spruce is a Friday choice.

When the "All aboard" call rings out at Cass, be prepared to board the train that combines past achievements with current adventure.

For more information consult www.cassrailroad.com.



The Cass Locomotive Shops restore, repair, and maintain the locomotives and passenger cars to precise standards. Shay #2, shown in the photograph, is currently undergoing extensive servicing that is expected to be completed by summer 2011.

Cass Shops and Shay Engines at Work Circa 1915



Top Photo: The G. C. & E photograph caption refers to the Greenbrier Cheat and Elk River Railroad that was formed in 1915. The railroad shops shown in the photograph were located near the depot and town of Cass. The railroad was affiliated with the West Virginia Pulp and Paper Company.

Inset Photo: A Shay locomotive appears to be descending Cheat Mountain toward Cass in this circa 1915 photograph.

Bottom Photo: Shay # 5 has been toiling up Cheat Mountain for 100 years. Built by Lima in 1905, Shay # 5 is one of the oldest engines in continuous service on its original line in the United States.