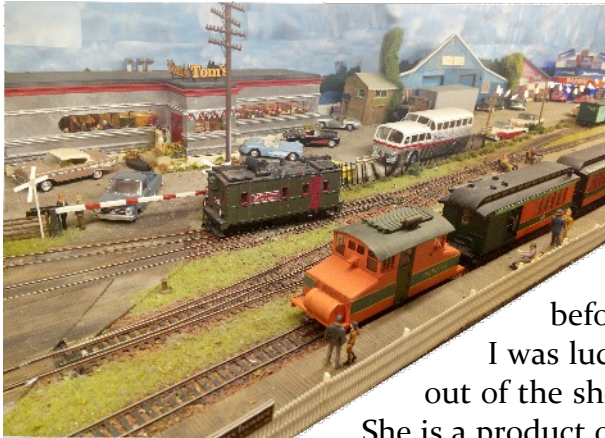


Pinetree to Potterville Summer 1963.

J. Williams

This trip was all thanks to a competition run by the local radio station ACR-FM which I entered a few months back. The first prize was a weekend at the Holiday Inn vacation lodge. Our prize was a trip to Holiday Inn for dinner and a full lunch trip on the Bedford Falls Pullman. The best of it was this included a guided visit to the Mertonford and Pinetree Railroad (MaP) behind the scenes. So I loaded the camera



up with more 16ASA Kodacolor, it's great having color pictures now, as long as the sun shines!

A while back I wrote up a trip Pa and I made on the Mertonford Pullman, a service that runs no longer. The weekend before our trip we visited the town of Borchester and had a look around the river frontage and the little shops and galleries, gee was that exciting. Anyway Ma and PA enjoyed it. I took the chance to mooch around the depot, it was a while before the Pullman was due through on its way to Bedford Falls.

I was lucky to see the old converted electric steeple cab loco coming out of the shed and setting off to collect the Pullman cars from Pinetree.

She is a product of the line's engineer, a Mr McPhwatt, who took an old truck

diesel engine and generator set, coupling this to the control gear of the electric loco. A light weight loco that is fine for the general passenger services through from the branch to Pine Tree. Light enough not to cause troubles on the trestles further down the line too. Much rattling and bell clanging she backed into the depot and then set off down the line towards Lawnton Junction. Odd, that. The town's spelt Lornton.

After lunch Pa took the car out for a trip over the Guardian Hill country and we followed the engine back towards Borchester on its return from

heading the day's Pullman service. We

managed to catch her heading over the Trestles at Castle Rock and running out of the depot. This was a bit of a rush shot and it was cloudy up at Pine Tree. I did

take some shots through the workshop window there though, Looks like they do all sorts there not just work for the MaP. After that it was a drive back through the

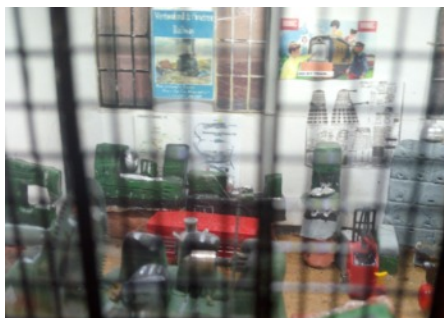
County to Mertonford and home. I managed some more shots at Lornton Junction and West Mertonford before we

made it home.

Back to the train and the prize. We drove to Pine Tree and parked up there in time to see the loco heading into the depot and backing onto its train. Our seats were in

the Club car at the back of the train. A cool view from the back of car over the open railings. Out of the depot and were in the dark steeply curved tunnel that leaves Pine Tree and heads into the hills. The line crosses two trestles in short order before swinging into the tunnel just past Castle Rock Halt. This little stop is only used by steam services heading to Pine

Tree. Good for a hike but not as a starting point to explore the line! Another tunnel and we pass the New Lake. A dammed stream really originally it fed the machinery at the Lornton Talc works. Much





clattering and rattling of crockery as we crossed the junction and slowed into the main depot at Lornton. As our train didn't connect with any other services, we stayed there for hardly any time before heading off through a steep and dark cutting and headed down the line towards Pen Pool. A scenic spot, for which the train

did not even slow down. Before much longer we pulled into Borchester. Plates were cleared away and some people derailed here. Again a whistle from the engine. I suppose they left the air whistle on from her earlier electric life? Anyway we drew out of Borchester and suddenly swung towards a bend in the river and the Borchester Aggregates plant the bore away into the river country.



Soon we were at coffee and heading into Gammon Point. This is the only depot I know that also sells ice cream, as well as post cards and tickets. Several more people left the train here to go and explore the Cat Waters, great walks and scenic vantage points. The second timber bridge and we eventually drift into Bedford Falls depot. The small depot is crammed up against the two



industries in this town. A large food processing plant belonging to Schulz Foods, it's here they make their sticky Pepper-



mint Pate. The depot is the most decorative one on the line. Flower beds and baskets. A small shop and diner take up most of the depot building. The ticket office is also the kitchen!

Ma and PA went on to the Holiday Inn, I hung around and took some pictures of engine running round the train. The conductor then escorted me onto the train and introduced me to the loco crew. On this train he rides in a cubicle off the kitchen. This takes up the majority of the baggage end of the combine. The centre car just has table settings, the last car is the observation/club car. With a bar and open veranda- the car, called Lucia, is the one we road to Bedford Falls in.

The loco sure was noisy, that truck engine in the centre of the body, in the cab with us, even if it is boxed in. The driver said that the line's Boxcab is just as bad. The new GE switcher is better, but doesn't have enough air for passenger work. While we sat in the depot the Doodlebug left for Lawnton, hooting and clattering it disappeared round the bend and out of sight. We had to wait for a message to be phone through to the depot to say that our route was clear to Gammon Point.

A guy ran up and handed the conductor and our driver each a piece of paper.

"Okay. We have the road." The driver stood at the corner of the cab and opened the throttle. He let me pull the switches for the bell and the whistle. A diesel with a whistle!

At Gammon Point we waited until a couple more slips of paper said we had the road to Borchester. The loco is wider than the infill of the cut or trestle over the Cat water Creek!

Borchester Aggregates and then Borchester depot. There the Doodle bug was waiting. As we slid to a halt she sidled out of the depot and headed back to Bedford Falls.

Out of the depot came the conductor, he handed a slip to the driver and we left for Lawnton. I still couldn't find out why this part of the line spells it the way it does, just that the original depot on this line spelt it that way! At Lawnton, or Lornton Junction I left the train to make my way to the depot building and the home of the line's Dispatcher. I watched the train draw out and waived to the conductor as he leant out of the kitchen door.

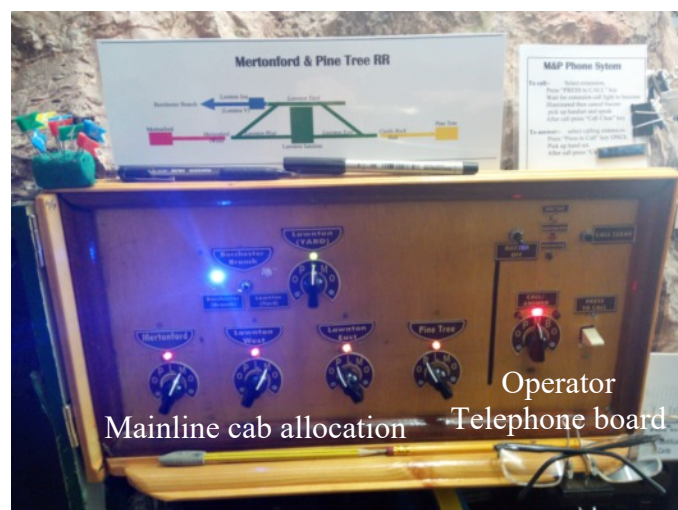


“Hi Jeremy?” A chap in cap and shirt with a tie called from the depot door. This was the Dispatcher. I crossed the tracks and we went into the depot and up the stairs. A cosy office with chair and telephones. For the rest of the afternoon, or at least until Ma and Pa caught up with me on the last Doodlebug of the day, the Dispatcher explained how the line was operated. How he called up the various depots on the phone and passed instructions of when to leave and where trains would meet. I had a close look at the Dispatch Panel, it sure looked complicated, but I was assured it wasn't really. “Once you're used to it.” He said.

I managed some more pictures down there and at Pine Tree before we left for home. A good day on Ahern County's own little line.

Behind Jeremy W's Journey

All of the depot power allocation is controlled from the Dispatcher's desk. This sits in The Lornton Depot. The three mainline cabs are allocated track from here: Pine Tree, Lawnton, and Mertonford, plus the approaches to Lornton itself, East and West. Also who controls the

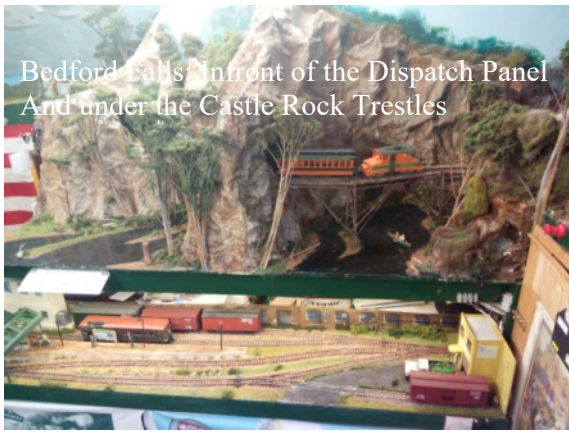


branch approach from Lawnton itself, the Borchester operator or one of the mainline cabs. All the operators are in 'phone contact from here.

The Branch, or Borchester operator controls throttle allocation on the branch itself. The two cabs changing at Gammon Point, this is the main reason for all branch trains stopping there, even though it is only a single line section.

As you may see, not all trains have to ascend from the branch to the mainline layout. To save unnecessary train transfer the far end of the transfer road is referred to as Lawnton Virtual. Services such as the local Doodlebugs from Bedford Falls to Lawnton, actually stop here. Goods stock is transferred to and from the Lornton depot via a dedicated siding to Lawnton Virtual and vice versa. Only through trains,





Bedford Falls: In front of the Dispatch Panel
And under the Castle Rock Trestles

such as Jeremy's Pullman use the transfer track, and are lifted bodily onto the main route. Here, once the buildings are back in place, and the Dispatcher has set the route for the Branch throttle, the branch operator sends the train into the junction itself, stopping at a fixed signal. The Dispatcher can then allocate the train to either Lornton cab or the Pine Tree operator. As the Dispatcher told Jeremy, "Simple really."

In order to aid stock transfer and simplify the operation of uncoupling and raiing/recoupling the trains that engage in this route

most frequently, they couplers within each rake are simple hook and loops directly fixed to each truck. Buckeye/Kadees are employed at the rake ends only.



That about updates the current situation on the MaP. I have left Jeremy's previous account of his journey on the line on the web site. This will allow you to see some of the changes that have taken place in-between accounts. The same goes for the new Schematic of the MaP. You will be able to see some changes to both the route and the confusingly "flexible" geography of Ahern County Vermont!

