

BY JEFF BENTON

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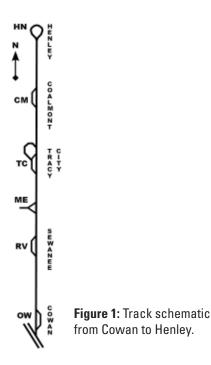
A while back I read Lou Adler's article on Page 24 of the October 2021 issue of *The Dispatcher's Office*. On Page 29 he wrote about how "a dispatcher will only write 4 or 5 different (forms of) train orders (TO) during an op session on a specific railroad." I thought, "That's neat; I wonder what ours are?"

To really find out, I tallied the directives (like TOs, Train Orders) from the first two years of dispatching the Tracy City Branch of the Eagle Point Railroad. A full 91% were comprised of only three forms. To my surprise Form H, the work extra order, was one of them. Then I remembered those H Forms were rubber-stamp orders. A rubber-stamp order is any order issued in the same form for the same situation day after day after day. The idea is that the order is so repetitive that one could almost design a rubber stamp to capture the bulk of it and then just write in a few details such as the current date. How did Form H get to be so prevalent on the Tracy City Branch? No, it is not for maintenance there.

The answer is in the design of the operations. Early on I knew I wanted a passenger train to run up to Tracy City and terminate there. See Figure 1 for a schematic of the branch. In the Tracy City Branch timetable in the January 1910 issue of *The Official Guide of the Railways*, most trains terminate (or originate) in Tracy City. I also thought this would be a nice change from simply running the branch from end to end and back again... and again.

Each timetable we've run so far has had a train that terminated in Tracy City in both the morning and the afternoon. A late version of this turn is exemplified by No. 216 and No. 217 in Figure 2, a partial timetable. Train No. 216 arrives in Tracy City at 9:54 a.m. The equipment and crew from this train then return as No. 217, leaving Tracy City at 10:04 a.m. I wrote such a turn into an early timetable and considered it done.

Something kept gnawing at me, though. How would the train crew turn the equipment for the run back from Tracy City? Oh yeah, there's a re-



versing loop (a "balloon track") at Tracy City, as shown in the Figure 1 schematic. But I knew what the track actually looked like at Tracy City. As shown in Figure 3, the bulk of this reversing loop is part of the branch's main track.

From the beginning, I knew I wanted to issue my directives in the style of train orders (as opposed to, say, track warrants). With train movements coordinated in the style of TT&TO

(Timetable & Train Order), the schedule for No. 216 will only get it as far as mile 2-9, the railroad-north (up-hill) turnout of the passing track at Tracy City. Nothing in the schedules authorizes it to proceed onto the trestles, around the loop, and into Gateway Cut -- that's all main track.

For a while I considered adding a new station in the cut, at "A" in Figure 3 (near the turn-back track in red). Then with "Station A" in the timetable, the turn would run to "A" before leaving the main track via the turn-back track (down the 5% grade in Fig. 3). This was not to be.

The railroad had been running for years before I ever first set foot on it. Getting the home-guard to recognize a new station would require good signage. Because everything in the cut (other than the track and ballast) is solid sandstone, signage there is infeasible at best.

See Figure 4 for a view from Gateway Cut, from Point A (in Figure 3). Fig. 4 shows a passenger train on the turnback track into Tracy City. (For a track-level look into the cut, see the title photo of the article on page 30 of the July 2022 issue of *The Dispatcher's Office*).

Without any signage, I gave up on introducing a Station at A. The area landmarks the company readily recognizes are Tracy City, Gateway Cut, and the Frankenstein Bridge. There was also in me a bit of the pride of an operating rail — the pride of making it work with what you're given.

Eventually, I settled on using Form H, the work extra order, to turn equip-

sample for a Tracy

ment using the loop. This form is not just Eagle Point Railroad for repair of track or Tracy City Branch right of way. It al-Timetable 11, Effective January 1, 2023 Read Up lows multiple trips Read Down Northward Southwa in both directions feet First Class First Class within the limits of 41 the order. Better yet, Lv. Daily STATIONS Some Arv. Daih Some Start First First a train with this AM 10:11 leback J. SB wye 9:48 Ar Class Class 9:31 L 0:19 A order doesn't have Trains 0.0 Tr. City Jct. JT Trains 10:14 87 Omitted OW 9:45 Omitted 10:14 owan to reach either of the 9:42 r Clarif Sand Patch PA boundaries in it. 10:17 RV 9:42 2 ME That's why it's ideal 9:38 10:21 26 for this case. 10:27 A 9:32 L Figure 5 shows a

Figure 2: Portion of timetable showing equipment flow

Frankenstein Bridge South to Monteagle and Cowan 2-6 Tracy City Traced from Rick Henderson's map.

Figure 3: Map of Tracy City and vicinity.



Figure 4: Train turning back.

2	C&E ENG 79 AT TC COM 9:55AM
	ENG 79 WORK EXTRA 9:50 AM TO 10:10 AM BETWEEN TRACK CITY AND FRANKENSTEIN BRIDGE NOT BREECTING AGAINST EXTRA TRAINS,
	HB.

Figure 5: Sample work extra directive.

City turn. It tells the crew with engine 79 to use the main track between 9:50 a.m. and 10:10 a.m., between Tracy City and the Frankenstein Bridge (but they don't have to go to the bridge). It also relieves them from protecting themselves from other extras. I'm usually working on this as No. 216 runs up the branch so it will be ready when *Continued on page 38*

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Tracy City continued it arrives in Tracy City.

Before issuing this work extra directive, I place a Popsicle stick (with magnets) on the dispatcher's panel. This is shown in Figure 6 for a crew turning equipment. Then, if another extra wants to run between Coalmont and Tracy City, this Popsicle stick reminds me to advise them to protect against the work extra in its work limits.

So that is why work-extra directives (or "orders") show up so often in the tally. There are at least two of them every day (one in the morning and another in the afternoon). They are also used for extra trains terminating in Tracy City, before the crew heads back south. While this use of this form may be a little unconventional, experience has shown that it works well for this.

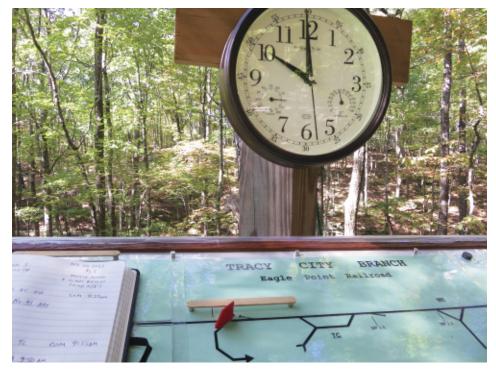


Figure 6: The Popsicle stick on the board is a reminder to the dispatcher to protect the extra train.

