

Allegheny Yard Branch presentation at 2019 MARPM

Slide 1 - Welcome and intro

Slide 2 - silence those devices!

Slide 3 - I'm interested in connections.

Slide 4 - Many interesting connections in Pittsburgh.

Slide 5 - Industry

Slide 6 - People

Slide 7 - Rail

Slide 8 - These products were produced or distributed in Pittsburgh by companies along the B&O Allegheny Yard branch.

Slide 9 - This five-point-nine mile branch served a diverse customer base.

Slide 10 - This is just a portion of the 1922 B&O Form 6 listings for the branch. Form 6 books are a great B&O resource containing data on Officers, Agents, Stations, Sidings, and Mileage.

Slide 11 - I moved to metro-Nashville in the summer of 2017, just after the last RPM-East was held. I finally have the combination of space, resources, local modelers, and personal experience to build a dream railroad.

Slide 12 - But what?

Slide 13 - What do I want to do?

Slide 14 - What is attracting my attention?

Slide 15 - Let's go back in time to learn more about the early Allegheny Yard Branch. It began as the Pittsburgh & Western and became a B&O property in the early Oughts.

Slide 16 - It was originally an independent railroad with some big dreams, as you can

see from this map that was published in an 1887 timetable.

Slide 17 - I grew up near Pittsburgh and visited grandparents frequently over the years. I was unfamiliar with this line because most of it was gone by the time I was ten years old. My first exposure came when this photo was posted on Shorpy.com. This photo is in the Detroit Publishing Collection of the Library of Congress. The file details indicate the image was taken between 1910 and 1920. I was first drawn to the elevated tracks across the Allegheny River, but then I noticed the foreground yard. What is that?

Slide 18 - I downloaded the image from the LoC site and was able to zoom in for a closer look. I knew about the ballpark from my grandfather. He watched Honus Wagner play baseball in Exposition Park, the original home of the Pittsburgh Pirates. But what was the railroad?

19 - 22 - Let's take a closer look around. This steam loco has several letters on the tender, not words. They are BR&P Ry. I had never seen an image of a Buffalo, Rochester & Pittsburgh loco in Pittsburgh. Review other details; freight cars, stores warehouse, passenger car, stadium. Murky as we go along.

Slide 23 - Then I found a cool map. The G.M. Hopkins company made plat maps for several cities that document dwellings, industry, infrastructure, roadways, and railroads. There are several volumes created in different years that cover the City of Pittsburgh. We are looking at the School Street yard from the other direction of the previous photo.

Slide 24 - As we look at the area today, much has changed. The Pirates still play baseball near here, just off to the right. Heinz Field is just off to the left. (toggle)

Slide 25 - Another photo showed up on the Historic Pittsburgh digital archive. This was taken in 1923 from the Manchester Bridge. It's longer than it is wide, so I need to show half here.

Slide 26 - Here's the other half. As you could guess, this picture is a goldmine of details. In addition to the vintage boxcars, there are five pickle tank cars and three vinegar tank cars in the yard. (toggle) I model 1926, so this yard image is almost current to my focus.

By this time, I had the Form 6 information, the Hopkins plat maps, and now this image. I was hooked on the Allegheny Yard branch for my next home layout.

Slide 27 - Obviously, the next step was to find the ICC valuation maps for this branch. I am in debt to Keith Devault for digging these up at the Archives 2 facility and having them scanned. These are long maps and I'm only showing a portion here. There were seven maps covering the branch.

Slide 28 - Maps aren't the only objects among the ICC valuation archives. There are quite a few photos, too. The School Street yard was the southern terminus of the BR&P. They shared loco facilities with the B&O and they had this freight house nearby. It's here on the map. (toggle)

Slide 29 - The B&O had the North Shore Stores facility, just upstream a few blocks. This is also an ICC valuation image. They didn't always compose the scene well. These images were bought from the B&O Railroad Museum from their on-line store.

Slide 30 - I can't model the entire line so I hope to focus on the first three miles. This runs from the Willow Grove yard to a point just beyond the Smokey Island yard. Yes, another yard. There are two yards here. Smokey Island is a classification yard and there is the South Avenue team yard. Across South Avenue are a few industries; Damascus Bronze, the Kaufmann department store warehouse, and Barrett Manufacturing.

Slide 31 - Another online resource are Penn Pilot aerial images. The Penn State library has these available as digital downloads. Here's a 1939 view of the Smokey Island and School Street yards. This is the earliest date for aerials here and we can see a new element in the yard.

Slide 32 - Let's take a moment to summarize the resources. Here's where photos have been discovered.

Slide 33 - Maps and other documents were found through these places.

Slide 34 - The branch serves an interesting combination of small and medium sized customers.

Slide 35 - A few photos capture long lost structures. This 1911 scene is very handy as

these buildings were gone by 1928.

Slide 36 - And the City photographer strikes again to document an improvement project. This is the same stretch of street as the previous photo but looking the other way and taken in 1912.

Slide 37 - We saw the B&O Stores building earlier in a valuation image, here's a better look at the size. The low, long, narrow building in front is the Allegheny depot.

Slide 38 - The HJ Heinz plant cannot be ignored. It was an extensive operation and was served by the B&O the Allegheny Yard branch. But the Pennsy Fort Wayne mainline was on the other side of the operation and pulled the lion's share of the business, as seen in this 1920 image. Most of the decent images from the Teens through the 1930s were taken on the Pennsy side, too.

Slide 39 - But there are a few, such as this 1908 image taken along River Avenue, which parallels the Allegheny Yard branch.

Slide 40 - Industries change over time and the Heinz operation grew. Here's a 1936 look from a nearby bridge. This building was in the previous photo.

Slide 41 - The branch is now a walking and biking path. Dave Wilson and I did some on the ground research last August on a near-perfect day. Many of the buildings from the 1920s plant have been replaced. This large building had a cornerstone from the 1930s.

While the weather was very nice, I had difficulty snapping decent shots as I brought the wrong lens.

Slide 42 - We make do with what we have. The facility is now the Heinz Lofts condos and apartments. This structure was erected in 1926, which is noted on this stone in the tower. From what I could determine, there is only one other building in the complex from the pre-1930 years and it is tucked back in this alleyway.

Slide 43 - The B&O did serve the Heinz car repair shop, as seen in this 1921 image with the Allegheny River in the background.

Slide 44 - There are other industries along this line that are not documented by the City Photographer. I stumbled into this 1905 document on the Historic Pittsburgh site

and found a few industry images.

Slide 45 - Heinz wasn't the only pickle packer along the branch. Lutz & Schramm had a decent operation.

Slide 46 - These images were on a single page of the Palmer pictorial.

Slide 47 - Here's Lutz & Schramm on the valuation map. Willow Grove yard is just to the left on the next valuation map.

Slide 48 - How does all of this fit together for my future layout? We all have givens and druthers, right? Over the last decade, my druthers have come into focus while operating on other layouts.

Slide 49 - I don't want to be overwhelmed with lots of layout, so I strive to keep it simple with one level and no hidden staging. I also like the bonus of being able to model two railroads.

Slide 50 - There are personal connections to this area, too. I frequently visited grandparents in Pittsburgh. My grandfather who watched Honus Wagner at Exposition Park worked at the Heinz plant during WW2 building gliders. I toured the Heinz plant in elementary school. Lastly, the BR&P was a favorite railroad of my formative model railroad years growing up in Indiana, PA, which was centered on the BR&P Indiana Branch.

Slide 51 - First design steps are in the research, much of this has been shared in these slides. I enjoy making line drawings that follow the prototype track layouts. It helps me understand the different components and removes the noise we find on valuation maps. The perspective for these drawings and for the future layout will be from the Allegheny River.

Slide 52 - These were created using the valuation maps. It was at this point when I realized this was a double track line. Other details popped out that I didn't know before, like this dam.

Slide 53 - The streets on the North Shore had different names than the ones on the other side of the river. This goes back to when it was a separate city. The many bridges offer small view blocks and can increase the distance of the line. I just noticed

this Yard Limit sign the other day so I'll need to issue train orders for operating and not just for the transfer runs to and from Willow Grove.

Slide 54 - The School Street yard has the BR&P team yard and RIP tracks. It also seems to be more of the arrival and departure area. The Manchester Bridge separates the School Street and Smokey Island yards. It is also where the Ohio River begins.

Slide 55 - Here's Smokey Island yard again. I haven't drawn this schematic yet. Some of the industries at the back will be shifted to the left. As I can't model most of the three miles beyond this yard, I won't need as many classification tracks.

Slide 56 - Here's a look at the customers adjacent to Smokey Island and some within the next mile. The Form 6 detail includes the car capacity on the spurs, making it handy to eliminate elements that don't add much to the operational value. Here's one spur shared by eight customers with a three car capacity. This data plus the valuation map assist our efforts to condense the prototype to fit our space.

Slide 57 - While most of the spurs serve industries on the other side of the tracks, there are a couple neat customers along the river.

Slide 58 - There are many more industries further along the branch. A couple of team tracks are noted along with a Pennsy connection. This isn't a major interchange point as there was more room at Willow Grove. Interestingly, this is where the Pittsburgh Locomotive Company was located. It became Alco, but closed in 1924. Duquesne Light took over the facility for storage. This company at the bottom raised my curiosity.

Slide 59 - Palmer's Pictorial came to the rescue! More pickles!!!

Slide 60 - Here's the last mile of the branch. Photos of Pittsburgh Screw and Bolt, Standard Sanitary Manufacturing, and even Pressed Steel Car have yet to surface.

Slide 61 - The Pittsburgh Screw and Bolt and Standard Sanitary factories were large facilities served by the Pennsy and B&O.

Slide 62 - The structures are easily visible in the 1939 aerial.

Slide 63 - Western Penitentiary remains in use. This is just one of the many facilities where Mike Brock sends STMFC scofflaws.

Slide 64 - I was very excited to find the Pressed Steel Car plant near the end of the branch. I had dreams of outbound new freight cars rolling to Willow Grove. But I've read a couple references were this plant closed in 1925. I'm still looking for a primary source. I've yet to find any images of this plant.

Slide 65 - By 1939 the area has been cleared.

Slide 66 - Here's one of the few images I've found online for the Pressed Steel Car Company plant, but this is the larger plant across the Ohio River in McKees Rocks. The image is dated 1919.

Slide 69 - So how do we fit this busy three miles into the new hobby haven? I need to consider access and aisles. A key consideration is the path from the outside door to the inside door for easy grocery transport. (describe other garage features)

This is my current favorite idea. I keep these early doodles simple and just label some areas for possible scenes and industries. I will reuse part of the Wheeling Freight Terminal yard as the Willow Grove staging yard. This is HO scale, with 36-inch minimum mainline curve radii. Aisles are at least three feet wide. The modeling focus is 1926.

Slide 70 - I don't know if it will all fit, but there will be compromises along the way. Portions of a Carnegie rolling mill and the Crucible Steel LaBelle Works might be eliminated and/or compressed. I'd like to include part of the National Casket operation as one of the last customers on the modeled line. Finally, a use for the AHM Gruesome Casket kit!

BTW, I found this image in a historic steamboat image collection at the University of Wisconsin - LaCrosse.

Slide 71 - Motive power will be small and medium steam locos. I suspect a few of these B&O D-7 class switchers were used. Here's a Ralph Dunn photo of 1164 at Allegheny Yard in 1934.

Slide 72 - Larger 2-8-0s were probably used for transfer runs to Willow Grove and maybe heavier switching where required. They may have been used for long pulls at the freight houses. I had thought they might be used to work larger industries downriver, but a loco use chart in the Form 6 book notes a restriction on locomotives

due to bridge ratings from the Smokey Island yard to the end of the branch. The E-24 and D-7 locos exceed the rating for the last three miles.

This is an E-24 class 2-8-0 that came onto the B&O when it was under Pennsy control. The photo is credited to Phil Soyring and dated 1937 in Pittsburgh.

Slide 73 - I don't know what the BR&P used here, possibly an 0-6-0 and/or an older Brooks 2-8-0. This is former BR&P #155 in a 1934 image credited to Ralph Dunn.

They had a weight restriction on the bridge crossing the Allegheny at Mosgrove, so their larger locos may not have migrated south. Possibly they had some 2-8-2's working out of Butler.

Slide 74 - Of course, there are other tasks ahead before benchwork can begin. Here is the hobby space and there is much to do.

Slide 75 - I hope to push this along so I can have an operating layout again.

Slide 76 - We wrap up with one more prototype image, a 1911 aerial view. This shows the core of the layout from the B&O Stores down to the School Street yard. These are the earlier bridges which would be replaced over the next twenty years.

Slide 77 - Thank you for your attention and attending RPM-East.

Slide 78 - Here are those resources again. Do we have any questions?

Slide 79 - Support upcoming RPM events!