

EAST BROAD TOP RAILROAD & COAL CO.

ROCKHILL FURNACE

1871

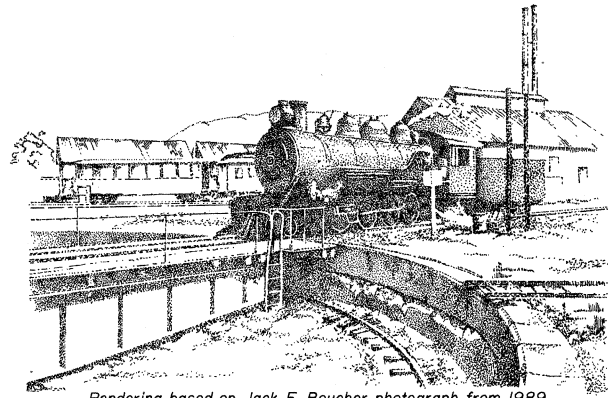


PENNSYLVANIA

1956

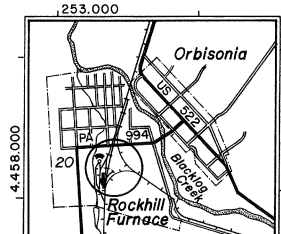


The East Broad Top Railroad and Coal Co. (EBT) was chartered April 16, 1856, to mine and carry coal from the Broad Top coal field. Financial difficulties prevented construction until the revival of the EBT charter by a group of Philadelphia businessmen on July 3, 1871. With good quality coking coal, hematite iron ore, and fluxing limestone all located nearby, Orbisonia, formerly a center of Juniata Valley iron production, was chosen as the site for the new twin furnaces of the Rockhill Iron and Coal Co. (RIC), incorporated in March of 1872. Construction began at the EBT Junction with the Pennsylvania Railroad in Mount Union in September of 1872, reached Rockhill Furnace in August of 1873, and climbed Sideling and Wray's hills to reach the RIC company coal mining town of Robertsdale in September of 1874. The EBT hauled coal to Rockhill Furnace, where it was converted to coke for fueling the blast furnaces, which produced pig iron until they were finally blown out in 1908.

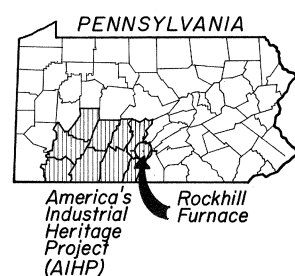


Rendering based on Jack E. Boucher photograph from 1989.

At Rockhill Furnace, the company built an extensive shop complex and roundhouse. The steam-powered, belt-driven shops made the EBT almost completely self-sufficient, supplying castings, forgings, and machined parts to the railroad, the mines, and outside customers. The railroad also built and maintained its own rolling stock. A modernization program in the early 1900s included the purchase of large Baldwin locomotives, and the installation of heavier track and stronger bridges. Pure quartzite ganister, consumed by refractory plants in Mount Union, became an additional source of traffic for the EBT. In 1919, the EBT was purchased by the Madera, Hill & Co. (MHC), a large coal mining concern. MHC improvements included the installation in 1925 of a coal washing plant at Mount Union which led to increased specialty coal sales. In 1933, the railroad adapted the "timber transfer" crane to the swapping of freight car wheel sets in order to smooth transfer and compete with growing highway truck competition. In addition to smoothing flow of materials at the point of transfer, the EBT maximized its capacity to carry rock and coal by constructing a unique high-capacity steel hopper car fleet.

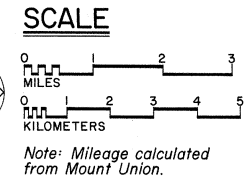
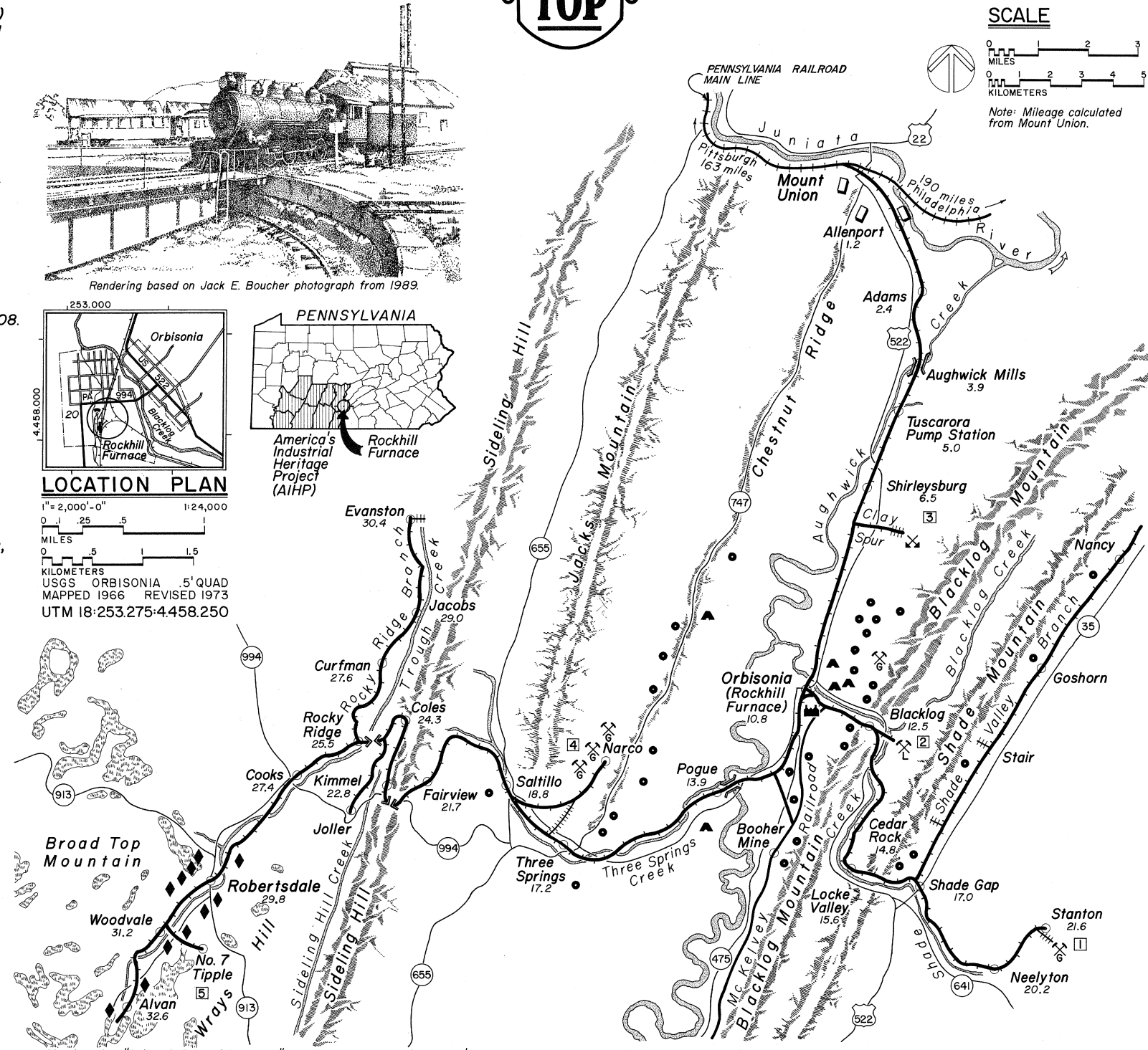


LOCATION PLAN
1" = 2,000'-0"
USGS ORBISONIA 5' QUAD
MAPPED 1966 REVISED 1973
UTM 18:253.275:4.458.250



Rockhill Furnace
America's Industrial Heritage Project (AIHP)

MHC declared bankruptcy in 1938, and the Rockhill Coal Company was then organized. After World War II, increasing labor costs, troublesome strikes, and shrinking reserves and markets for Broad Top coal all affected the EBT. The railroad's passenger service was cut back, and then eliminated in August, 1954. The EBT's heavy reliance on coal traffic placed it in a precarious financial position. The EBT was officially abandoned on March 31, 1956, shortly after the last of the Mount Union brick kilns converted from coal to natural gas. In 1960, EBT owner Nick Kovalchick restored service to part of the EBT for the Orbisonia bicentennial. A short portion of the line and several of its steam locomotives have remained in service ever since. The EBT was declared a National Historic Landmark in 1964, and remains the only operating narrow gauge railroad east of the Rocky Mountains.



- LEGEND**
- Bridge
 - << Tunnel
 - Rockhill Furnace
 - ▲ Iron Furnace
 - ▣ Refractory Brick Manufacturer
 - Standard Gauge Track
 - Narrow Gauge Track
 - ▨ Inclined Plane
 - ⊗ Quarry - Ganister (Si O₂)
 - ⊙ Quarry - Limestone (Ca CO₃)
 - Iron Ore Mine
 - ⊗ Clay Pit
 - ◆ Coal Mine - Deep
 - ◻ Coal Mine - Strip
 - ① General Refractories Co.
 - ② E.I. Grove
 - ③ Rockhill Mineral Co.
 - ④ National Refractories Co. (Narco)
 - ⑤ Rockhill Iron & Coal Co.

Map based on "Railroad-Related Resources" map from Denver Service Center's AIHP-NPS report on EBT in May 1990, and various maps in *East Broad Top*, by Lee Rainey and Frank Kyper, 1982.

This recording project is part of the Historic American Engineering Record (HAER), a long-range program to document the engineering, industrial, and transportation heritage of the United States. HAER is administered by the Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record Division (HABS/HAER) of the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. The Southwestern Pennsylvania Recording Project was cosponsored during the summers of 1989 and 1994 by HAER under the general direction of Dr. Robert J. Kapsch, Chief of HABS/HAER and by America's Industrial Heritage Project (AIHP), Randall D. Cooley, Project Director.

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