

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**

(Type all entries complete applicable sections)

STATE:	Pennsylvania
COUNTY:	Huntingdon
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY DATE:	

1. NAME

COMMON:	East Broad Top Railroad
AND/OR HISTORIC:	East Broad Top Railroad

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:			
Meadow Street			
CITY OR TOWN:		CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT:	
Rockhill Furnace		#9	
STATE:	CODE:	COUNTY:	CODE:
Pennsylvania	42	Huntingdon	61

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP		STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Object <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress	Yes: <input type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)				
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)	<input type="checkbox"/> Comments

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:			
The East Broad Top Railroad and Coal Company			
STREET AND NUMBER:			
CITY OR TOWN:		STATE:	CODE:
Rockhill Furnace		Pennsylvania	42

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:			
Huntingdon County Court House			
STREET AND NUMBER:			
Penn Street			
CITY OR TOWN:		STATE:	CODE:
Huntingdon		Pennsylvania	42

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:			
DATE OF SURVEY:			
<input type="checkbox"/> Federal <input type="checkbox"/> State <input type="checkbox"/> County <input type="checkbox"/> Local			
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:			
STREET AND NUMBER:			
CITY OR TOWN:		STATE:	CODE:

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7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (If known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The East Broad Top Railroad today represents a surprisingly intact specimen of the steam era of railroading. With one exception, the approximately thirty-three miles of the main line are intact, including one tunnel at Coles, although only five miles of it (from Rockhill to Colgate's Grove) are in use. A portion approximately 1400' long was washed out in 1972, but the grading has been stabilized and the damage is not extensive. This portion is just north of Shirleysburg, running parallel to Aughwick Creek. The main line originally ran from Robertsdale to Mount Union, but was then extended south from Robertsdale to Alvan. Branching off of the main line were three spurs to strip mines, at Shade Gap, Coles Valley and Rocky Ridge. Today only a 3/4 mile portion of the Shade Gap spur track remains. An additional 3/4 mile of track here was also washed out in 1972. This stretch is used by the Shade Gap Electric Railway, a public entertainment feature.

Aside from the track, the railroad property includes the Mount Union yard, the Rockhill yard, and structures associated with the Saltillo, Coles, Robertsdale, and Wood stations. With the exception of the Rockhill yard, where the East Broad Top shops are located as well as the primary roundhouse and car barn, and the Orbisonia station, the rest of the properties are in varying states of decay and disrepair. The Saltillo station house and tankhouse remain, as do the Coles station house and tankhouse. The Robertsdale station house remains, while at Wood there are only sheds and a supply house. At Mount Union, where the East Broad Top transferred its cargo to the Pennsylvania Railroad, most of the freight offices have burned. The roundhouse, engine house, and coal yards are in fair condition.

The Rockhill yard, with all its shops and service buildings, represents one of the best features of the East Broad Topy, yet even it is in a vulnerable condition. (Refer to enclosed map for precise layout.) The bulk of the structures at Rockhill date from 1874. This includes the roundhouse and the "Armstrong" turntable. The locomotive roundhouse is one story tall, built of red brick, with berths for eight engines. The paint shop is a one story brick structure. The two-story stone farmhouse which predates the railroad, was used as the storehouse. The blacksmith shop, the foundry and the connected machine and car shops are all frame buildings of similar construction. They all house original machinery. The foundry is filled with many of the patterns used in making the rolling stock. The machine and car shops are still housing a variety of belt-driven tools, although the central steam engine which powered all the machines is no longer functioning. A few machines have been adapted for use with an electric motor. Beyond these shops are the carpentry shop, sand house, and ice house. Beyond these shops, outside the yard proper, is the railroad reservoir, which was formed by the damming of Jordan Creek, which runs along the western boundary of the yard. Across the track and to the north of the reservoir are the coal tower, water plug, sheet metal car barn, and one story frame freight station.

In addition, there are three structures formerly used as tool and storage sheds, now leased to the Shade Gap Electric Railway, which operates over the remainder of the Shade Gap spur. Across Meadow Street from the yard is the Orbisonia passenger station, which is largely unaltered except for

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the conversion of the waiting room and the freight room into a gift shop and a snack bar, respectively.

The rolling stock consists of six "Mikado" type locomotives, built for the East Broad Top by the Baldwin works of Philadelphia, several passenger and freight cars, and several miscellaneous cars, such as a gas-electric car built at the Rockhill Furnace yard in 1926.

Boundaries:

The landmark is composed of the thirty-two and a half miles of main track from Mount Union to Alvan. The right-of-way extends 60' from the middle of the track, on either side, and this 120' zone constitutes the landmark along the railroad's length, except at Rockhill Furnace. At Rockhill Furnace, the landmark boundaries are expanded to include the yard and facilities, and the one-and-a-half mile of the Shade Gap spur from its origin at Rockhill Furnace east to the point of intersection of Blacklog Creek with U.S. Route 522. The 120' right-of-way zone constitutes the boundaries on this one-and-a-half mile stretch as well. The Rockhill yard is bounded thusly: beginning at the intersection of Meadow Street (State Route 994) with the East Broad Top right-of-way, proceed W along the south curb of Meadow Street approximately 430' to the intersection of the south curb with the west bank of Jordan Creek. Then proceed south along the west bank of the creek approximately 2000' to the foot of the railroad reservoir, thence E approximately 200' to the eastern limit of the right-of-way. The boundary follows the right-of-way north for 1000', and then branches to the northeast, approximately 900', in a straight line, which intersects with the southern boundary of the Shade Gap spur right-of-way at the junction of its two branches. The boundary continues to run northwest along the northern boundary of the right-of-way of the north branch of the spur, to its intersection with the south curb of Meadow Street, thence W along the southern curb to the point of origin. These boundaries enclose all the remaining track of the East Broad Top Railroad, the various stations and service buildings remaining on the line, as well as the Rockhill Furnace yard and facilities.

8. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- Pre-Columbian; 16th Century 18th Century 20th Century
 15th Century 17th Century 19th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) 1871-1956

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- | | | | |
|----------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal | <input type="checkbox"/> Education | <input type="checkbox"/> Political | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Phi- | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry | losophy | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention | <input type="checkbox"/> Science | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art | Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Human- | _____ |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Commerce | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature | itarian | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications | <input type="checkbox"/> Military | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation | <input type="checkbox"/> Music | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Transportation | _____ |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

One of the oldest narrow gauge lines in America, the East Broad Top Railroad operated for over eighty years as a coal-carrying line in the heart of the Pennsylvania mining region. Established in 1871, the East Broad Top transported semi-bituminous coal from the Broad Top mines, as well as timber, sand, rock, general freight, and passengers to the Pennsylvania Railroad, over a thirty-three mile track from Alvan to Mt. Union.

Decline in the use of coal after World War II forced the East Broad Top to cease operations in 1956. All of its track and rolling stock seemed doomed, but the purchaser of the line generously preserved five miles of the track and six of the steam engines. The original engines and passenger cars are now used to carry visitors on the ten-mile round trip out of Orbisonia, where the original station, roundhouse, and shops are preserved, and opened to the public.

History:

Before the Civil War, a group of retired businessmen on a vacation near Broad Top City realized that the construction of a railroad would make possible the exploitation of the vast quantities of bituminous coal in the Broad Top region. But the Civil War interfered with their plans, and it was not until 1871 that the East Broad Top Railroad and Coal Company was established. The construction of the railroad soon began, and by 1874 the line ran between Robertsdale and Mount Union, where it joined the Pennsylvania Railroad. The railroad wound in and out of the mountains for thirty miles, but subsequently was lengthened to about forty miles, including three spurs extending out to the strip mines at Shade Gap, Coles Valley, and Rocky Ridge. Today only a portion of the Shade Gap spur still remains.

The most unusual feature about the railroad was that it was a narrow gauge line. Instead of employing the standard width of four feet eight-and-a-half inches between the rails, the East Broad Top's rails were separated by but three feet. When the line was built, the narrow gauge was popular because it involved smaller costs for grading. The shops of the railroad stood at Rockhill Furnace, a middle point on the line.

Although the railroad carried timber, sand, rock and general freight, and had a passenger service, its great money-maker was coal. Trains pulled

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(Number all entries) East Broad Top Railroad #8 Statement of Significance Page 2

coal-laden cars to Mt. Union, where the coal was transferred to the Pennsylvania Railroad. In the decades after its construction, the railroad prospered especially as the tonnage of coal hauled increased for years. But after the end of World War II, when other fuels began to supplant coal, the line's business suffered, so much so that by the 1950's the end of operations was in sight. In 1953 the road ended passenger service, and on April 16, 1956, the company ran its last train.

The closing of the railroad apparently presaged its total abandonment. A public-spirited railroad fan purchased the entire line in 1956, however, and began to operate part of the line as a tourist attraction in 1960. The East Broad Top trains continue today to be operated and maintained by engineers and mechanics who were associated with the railroad in its coal-carrying days and original machinery is used in making repairs.

