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# Coxton Yard

Adam C. Kachurak

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The Lehigh Valley Railroad ceased to exist in 1976. However, the Consolidated Rail Corporation (Conrail) continued to operate Lehigh Valley equipment decades after. Here, nature has stripped the Conrail blue from a former General Electric locomotive, exposing its Lehigh Valley diamond. Truly, this engine is at “home.”

## Background

I took the following photographs on January 13, 2006 with the permission of the current owner of Coxton Yard, Ronald M. Delevan, Inc. Active railroad shops and yards are dangerous places for trespassers. As such, do not trespass.

When describing certain photographs, I relied on an article written by one Mr. Cosgrove of the Citizens Voice (Wilkes-Barre, PA 2001). Unfortunately, when updating this, I was unable to relocate the article. Therefore, bare citations remain with the hope that, in the future, I will be able to fill in the details.

## Introduction

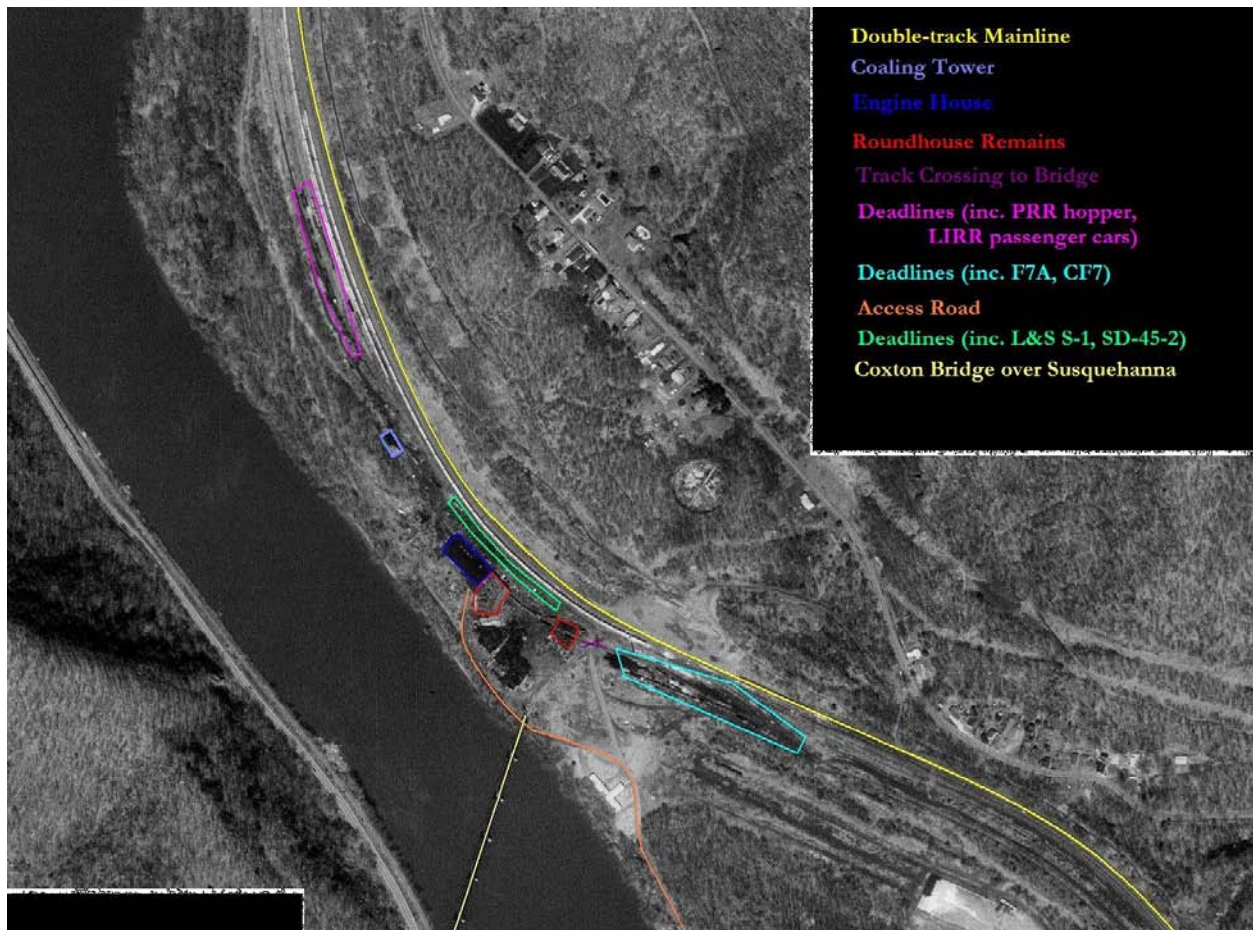
Once one of the many centers of coal-fueled industrialization in Northeastern Pennsylvania, the Lehigh Valley Railroad’s Coxton Yard is now a shell of its former self. Instead of endless tracks of loaded hoppers filled with anthracite coal, high grass, trees and hulks—incomplete and complete—of locomotives dominate the landscape. However, life goes on: while some locomotives receive new life through the efforts of locomotive rebuilder Ronald M. Delevan, Inc., others meet their scrap metal fate at the tip of an

acetylene torch. Keeping watch over all activity are the remnants of Coxton Yard's past, some easily visible and others somewhat more covertly peering from nature's reclamation of the land.

Asa Packer's Lehigh Valley Railroad constructed Coxton Yard in 1870, focusing on the need to transport anthracite coal from the rich coalfields of Northeastern Pennsylvania. Not currently visible is the Coxton Yard hump yard, which closed in 1965. (Cosgrove) A little over ten years later, the Lehigh Valley Railroad met a similar fate when it became part of the federal government's Consolidated Rail Corporation (Conrail). (Cosgrove) By 1996, Coxton Yard was all but abandoned. (Cosgrove)

Today, Coxton Yard has new—albeit restrained—life. The Reading and Northern Railroad, a regional railroad that extends from Mehoopany, Pennsylvania to Reading, Pennsylvania, operates the southern portion of the yard. Ronald M. Delevan, Inc., a locomotive rebuilder and scrapper, is headquartered in Coxton Yard's former diesel shops and the remnants of its steam locomotive-era roundhouse. Despite being quite overgrown by weeds and brush, the northern portion of the yard retains most of its track, though the ties to which those tracks are anchored clearly show their age. Coxton Yard's history, remnants, and current operations tell the story of a majestic railroad, a changing national energy policy and local economy, the slow demise of the United States vast, though often overlapping, railroad system, and the fighting comeback of the railroad industry as an efficient method of transportation.

### Facilities and Yard Photography



The above satellite-photography key is helpful for placing the following photographs in a geographic context.



## Facilities Photography

The following photographs focus on most, but not all, of the remaining structures of Coxton Yard.



Very few railroad roundhouses remain, and even fewer are still used for railroad-related purposes. Unfortunately, the Coxton Yard roundhouse shows the deleterious combined effects of time and a fire decades earlier. Immediately behind (and connected to) this portion of the roundhouse is the diesel shop. When I took this photograph, Reading and Northern Railroad SD40-2 no. 3055 rested in a state of (dis)repair. Currently, however, no. 3055 operates wearing Reading and Northern green and yellow across the Reading and Northern system.



More clearly showing the effects of the roundhouse fire (and where the roundhouse ceases to remain).





Despite looking like it was as much as scrap as a repair-in-progress, as noted above, Ronald M. Delevan, Inc. rebuilt this locomotive. This photograph more clearly shows that the locomotive rebuilder operates the remaining roundhouse stalls that are structurally complete. In addition, this photograph also shows the locomotive pit that has seen everything from the Lehigh Valley's earliest steam locomotives to these modern diesels.



Though the roundhouse originally was shaped roughly like a half circle, the aforementioned fire decimated the center portion. Thus, only the ends of the half circle remain (above is the southern half). Note that no turntable remains. Instead, two tracks feed the northern half of the roundhouse and diesel shop.





The rear of the northern half of the roundhouse illuminated by the setting winter sun. Note the Coxton Bridge behind the trees to the right.



Near the roundhouse remains is a lone track diamond. Although the crossing track appears to run into equipment, beyond that equipment is the bridge to the Lehigh Valley Railroad's former Bowman's Creek Branch.





To the south of the roundhouse is a stretch of straight track next to a small structure. Although merely a guess, this appears to be a former scale.





"Coal trains that came from the Bowman's Creek and West Pittston branches used the Coxton Bridge, which crossed over the Susquehanna at Forest Castle in Exeter, entering the yard near the roundhouse." (Cosgrove)



North of the roundhouse and diesel shop stands one of Coxton Yard's former coaling towers. To state that it's immense is an understatement—note the stairs climbing to its apex. The tower contains at a minimum seven tender distribution chutes, which were fed by the sloped mechanism to the rear (left) of the tower.





The coaling tower as viewed from the front. Amazingly, despite dieselization of the Lehigh Valley and the seeming liability posed by the structure to Conrail, this relic survived. Note the rectangular sign at the top of the structure.



Like the coaling tower, Roberts & Schaefer Company still exists, as does its Chicago headquarters.



The former Lehigh Valley Railroad diesel shop, undoubtedly the best-preserved structure at Coxton Yard, shows signs of life. To the left is a locomotive prime mover and inside are three locomotives in various states of repair.



Inside the diesel shop (and Ronald M. Delevan, Inc.'s headquarters), a Texas Central Business Lines 4-axle GE nears completion. Note the diamond-plate steps to the cab door.



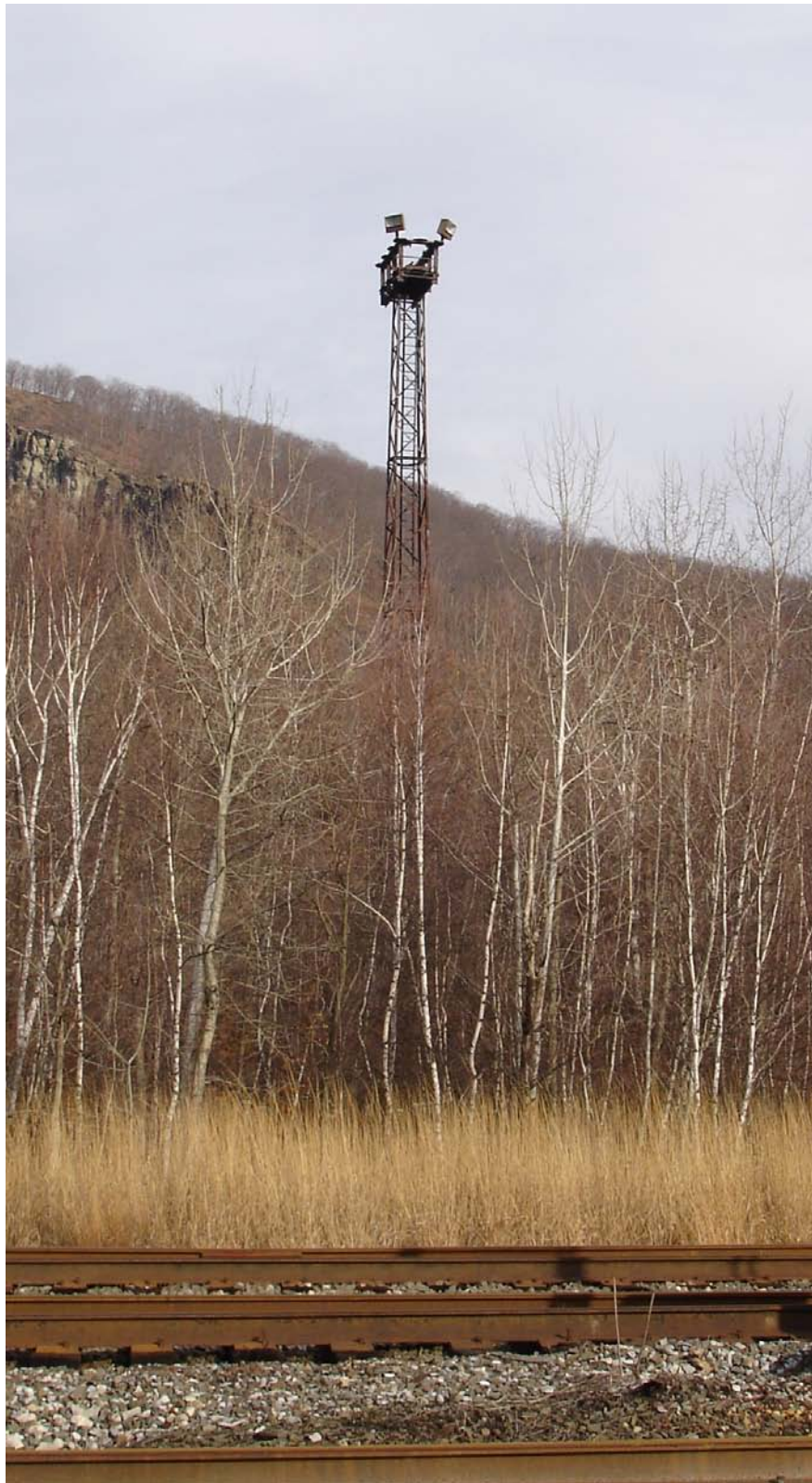


To the right of the Texas Central Business Lines GE is Reading and Northern Railroad SD50 no. 5029. In front of the Texas Central Business Lines GE is an additional GE locomotive, albeit in a much earlier state of rebuilding.



Also to the right of the Texas Central Business Lines GE is a prime mover. As indicative of its size, note that it rests on a semi trailer.





Throughout Coxton Yard stand Lehigh Valley Railroad-era light towers.

### Yard Photography

The following photographs focus on the physical Coxton Yard, including the curiosities found within it. Note that between the time I took these photos and the latest update to this collection, many of the locomotives that follow have been sold, donated to

preservation outfits, and/or scrapped. I sincerely hope that some of the more historically significant units remain.



Among dead locomotives sit a few freight cars. Of them all, this one is most interesting for what can be seen in its upper right corner.



A better look at the ballast hopper from the preceding photograph. Although the keystone rode the rails after the Pennsylvania and New York Central Railroads merger, formally the keystone met its demise in 1968. This ballast hopper survived two mergers and one asset sell-off. It would be a shame for this car to meet the torch.





Near the yard's entrance rests one of the quintessential freight and passenger locomotives, the F-7. Time has been quite unkind to this locomotive; in numerous places the body has rusted straight through. Spray-painted on the nose is CNVX no. 97A.



A cousin of the preceding locomotive, this CF-7 shows two former owners: The AT&SF and Amtrak. Although rust is taking care of its number, no. 581 is still readable.



Two Long Island Railroad passenger coaches are also stuck among the dead locomotives.



Opposite the Long Island Railroad passenger cars rests a former GTW and Reading Blue Mountain Northern SD38C no. 2001.





Former Pocono Northeast Railroad SW1 no. 601 used to rest across the Susquehanna near Exeter, Pennsylvania. However, with the Coxton Bridge closed, the Pocono Northeast track overgrown and mostly abandoned, and the SW-1 missing many pieces, it looks like the Railroad will soon be a memory.



Former Reading and Northern C30-7 no. 8011 sits in its former Norfolk Southern black paint.



More big power with an identity crisis. Former (at least stenciled for) Reading and Northern no. 8354, a SD45-2, still wears the colors of its first owner.



Former Reading Blue Mountain and Northern U23B no. 2398 sits in line with its sister units #2397 and #2399 (out of frame to the right). Spray-painted on all three is "RMDIX."





This former Conrail GE locomotive looks as if it was broadsided.



Adding a little color to the deadlines is Louisville and Nashville U25B no. 1616. Since I took this photograph, this unit has moved to a southern railroad museum, which plans to restore it.





Some locomotives appear better maintained than others. For example, Norfolk Southern SW1500 no. 2337.



Standing north of the diesel shop and looking north towards Coxton Yard, one can appreciate both the size of the yard and the quantity of equipment present. Note the grey Conrail "Ballast Express" maintenance-of-way units.