

It is the last of its breed east of the Rockies and the oldest narrow gauge railroad in the nation. Built in the early 1870s, the East Broad Top hauled iron, coal, ore, minerals and passengers for over 83 years. The three-foot-gauge trackage twisted along a picturesque 32-mile route connecting Mount Union, Orbisonia and Robertsedale in remote and beautiful south-central Pennsylvania. The Eastie earned its keep until the end of regular operations in the autumn of 1956. With the closing of the last Rockhill Coal Company mine, the EBT quietly closed its doors. It had outlived hundreds of its slim gauge counterparts across the country. The EBT connected isolated communities with the mighty Pennsylvania Railroad in Mount Union. It was here that the narrow railroad interchanged with the Standard Railroad of the World, using unique three-rail trackage and its own engines equipped with dual couplers. When the EBT stopped hauling coal in the late 50s, it was not torn up. While waiting for scrap prices to rise, owner Nick Kovalchick and his family became interested in preserving the line. A group of Orbisonia citizens, who wanted to celebrate the settlements bicentennial, approached the Kovalchick Salvage Company in 1960 about the possibility of reopening a portion of the line. EBT's Operating Vice President C. Roy Wilburn was still on the payroll and, after much hard work and hard cash, the EBT reopened on August 13, 1960 for tourist service over a short section of trackage that ran north out of Orbisonia. Now, the rest is history. The EBT is unique and colorful in many ways. No where else can steam locomotives be found operating over original tracks with their three-way stub switches positioned by Harp switchstands. The Orbisonia shop complex, built after the 1882 fire, is one of the most outstanding examples of steam-powered, belt-driven machinery in America. Along the old line, the rails and bridges are still in place, tunnels wait in empty silence, cars are scattered about the Mount Union yards, and a standard gauge switcher still waits in the old, two-stall enginehouse for the restoration of the entire railroad. The EBT stands today as it did yesterday, unique in the field of historic, authentic narrow gauge railroading in the East.

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