



# Cass: The Boom Town Behind the Train

**A self-guided walk of the logging boom town of Cass, West Virginia**



## **Welcome to Cass Scenic Railroad State Park**

**Upon forming** the West Virginia Pulp & Paper Company, the Luke family needed massive amounts of red spruce pulp for papermaking in Covington, Virginia. In 1899, John G. Luke acquired more than 67,000 acres of mostly red spruce for what would become Cass. The breadth of the company expanded when Samuel E. Slaymaker convinced Luke to include a sawmill for lumber and flooring operations at Cass. A new subsidiary was formed, the West Virginia Spruce Lumber Co.

**West Virginia Pulp & Paper** built the town and operated the timber operations until 1943, when it was sold to Mower Lumber Company. The operation closed in July of 1960. In 1961 the State purchased Cass, and in 1963 the first tourists took a ride on Cass Scenic Railroad.

**The walk begins** in front of the store, and will take approximately 30 minutes to complete.

**Cass remains virtually unchanged** for over a hundred years. Expect to walk near roads on boardwalks, gravel roads and gentle inclines over short distances. Have fun and be safe.

### **Let's begin the town tour . . . .**

#### **1. The Cass Company Store: The Heart of the Community**

Providing all the needs for a community of more than 2,000 residents, the Pocahontas Supply Company provided a lifeline to this remote logging town. Built in 1902, this three story building sold everything from shaving cream to farm equipment, jewelry to household furniture, and held the title of largest company store in the country for some time. The Company Store housed the Post Office and company offices. The current Post Office was originally Net kin's Meat Market. It contained an ice house and butchered 25 hogs and 25 cows weekly to keep the workers and residents fed.

**Walk down the side walk toward the white, two-story building with the gravel parking lot on the right.**

## **2. The Cass Hotel:**

### **A Night on the "Right" Side of the Tracks**

You are standing in front of the only hotel on the "right" side of the tracks in Cass. Many hotels, bars and brothels made their business across the river, on the other side of the railroad tracks in an area known as East Cass or Dirty Street. The Cass Hotel, built in 1902, housed those upstanding workers, visitors and businessmen who preferred to not be associated with the goings on of Dirty Street. The original structure consisted of two



identical buildings connected by a two story porch. You can still see the door that would have opened to the second story porch.

The picture offers a birds-eye view of Dirty Street (bottom) and Cass (top.)

**Follow the road around the bend and stop near the intersection with Back Mountain Road. Here you can see stops 3, 4, & 5.**

## **3. The Masonic Lodge: Keeping Tradition Alive for Over 100 Years**

Looking across the road, you can see the Cass Masonic Lodge No. 124. Chartered on November 12, 1903, the first meetings were held across the river in East Cass. In 1904, West Virginia Spruce Lumber Company donated the plot of land to be used for the building you see in front of you today. The lodge is still active and ranks as the second oldest, continually active Lodge in West Virginia.

## **4. Cass Community, Company and Church**

Directly beside the Lodge sits the Cass Presbyterian Church. Convening for the first time on March 12, 1905, the first congregation consisted of 15 members. West Virginia Spruce Lumber Company donated the bell. In 1974, the church was donated to the town of Cass for use as a community center.

## **5. The Cass Jail: Where the Good Meets the Bad**

Look across the road to the building marked "Mayor's Office". This building served two purposes, the mayor's office upstairs, and the jail downstairs. Prior to 1902, when the building was constructed, lawbreakers were locked in a boxcar. Lincoln "Link" Cochran, the town's first constable, was known to have no tolerance for those who stepped outside the boundaries of the law. He would often ride out of town on the train; get off after only a couple miles and sneak back to surprise lawbreakers.

**Cross Back Mountain Road and continue straight ahead onto the gravel road. Stop near the intersection and look down the row of houses on Main Street.**

## **6. The Cookie Cutter Cass House**

Look closely, the homes look as though they were cut from a cookie cutter. A company worker had the option of buying or renting a home from the company. A house consisted of a living

room, dining room and kitchen downstairs, and three bedrooms upstairs. Bathrooms began to be added in the 1920's. When a home was sold, the deed included a clause that the home could only be sold back to the company for the exact amount it was purchased. One advantage to buying a house was that you could build on additions with free lumber provided by the company.

*Can you spot the cookie cutter homes and the ones that have been altered?*

**Walk up the gravel road and make your first right. Stops 7 and 8 are at the top of the hill. Stop in front of the concrete sidewalk on your left.**

### **7. Big Money on Big Bug Hill**

Looking uphill to your left is "Big Bug Hill," the area of Cass reserved for managers, superintendents, and other elite residences. The highest home on the hill is the Luke House, also known as the Clubhouse. Built for the Luke family in 1916, it was turned over to Emory Shaffer, general manager, after Mrs. Luke died only five years after its completion.



Cass Main Street in mid-1900's looking towards Big Bug Hill.

### **8. The Good Doctor: Hard Working and a Work in Progress**

The house sitting at an angle, to your left was built for Dr. Uriah Hannah who served as the company doctor for 29 years. Company employees were offered health care for \$0.75 per month or \$1.00 per month to cover the entire family. Dr. Hannah was known for traveling miles in every direction to check in on patients, including workers in logging camps. The small building to the left of the home was an office and waiting room, and the large building to the right, opposite the doctor's home, was used as a hospital for a period of time. Funds are being secured to restore the home.

**Continue down the gravel road and turn right onto the pavement. Walk down the wooden walkway to your left.**

### **9. Boardwalks: A Path into the Past**

The wooden walkway you just crossed and the others throughout the town are reconstructions of actual sidewalks that once existed. Built from second grade lumber, they served to keep townspeople out of the muddy streets. Today they give us an opportunity to step into the past and experience what a walk through Cass might have been like in the first half of the 20th century.

**Walk down the stairs, and stop at the bottom for the final stop in our tour.**

### **10. Hay for the Horses and Fuel for the Fire**

Many horse teams were used in logging operations at Cass. The metal building on your left held the hay that was used to feed these horse teams. Today it houses the *Cass Showcase*, a 20-minute video and HO scale model of Cass. The concrete building under the hay barn, where the craft

shop is today, once served as coal bins. Although wood was plentiful, many used coal to heat their homes, and this too had to be purchased at the Company Store

**You have completed our self-guided walk.**

**Thank you for taking a moment to journey back to a time when Cass was a busy, logging boom town.**

We invite you to visit the  
**Cass Historical Museum**  
(Kyle J. "Catty" Neighbors Logging Museum)  
to learn more about the logging operations and town of Cass.

**Follow the boardwalk to the right, toward the Company Store.  
The Museum is the first door on your right.**

Ask our staff about more information on guided tours and visit these web sites:

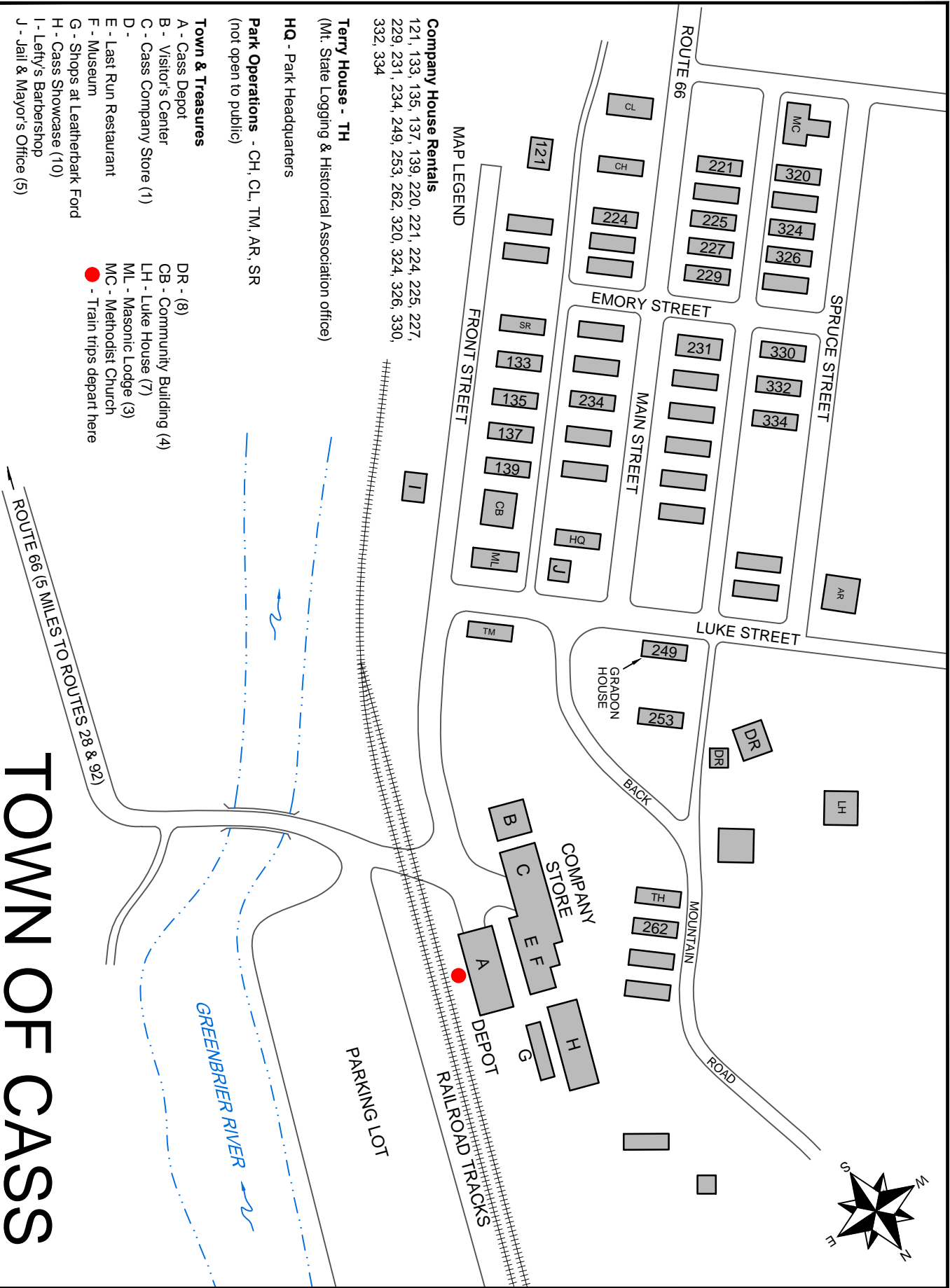
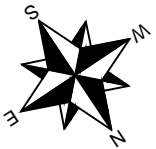
**[www.msrlha.org](http://www.msrlha.org)**

**[www.cassrailroad.com](http://www.cassrailroad.com)**



This brochure was developed by Angela Gernert for Mountain State Railroad and Logging Historical Association, a 501(c)(3) volunteer organization, through a grant from the West Virginia Humanities Council. (June 2008)

Reset June 10, 2013 for web posting  
[www.wvstateparks.com](http://www.wvstateparks.com)



**MAP LEGEND**

**Company House Rentals**  
 121, 133, 135, 137, 139, 220, 221, 224, 225, 227, 229, 231, 234, 249, 253, 262, 320, 324, 326, 330, 332, 334

**Terry House - TH**  
 (Mt. State Logging & Historical Association office)

**HQ - Park Headquarters**

**Park Operations - CH, CL, TM, AR, SR**  
 (not open to public)

**Town & Treasures**

- A - Cass Depot
- B - Visitor's Center
- C - Cass Company Store (1)
- D -
- E - Last Run Restaurant
- F - Museum
- G - Shops at Leatherpark Ford
- H - Cass Showcave (10)
- I - Lefty's Barbershop
- J - Jail & Mayor's Office (5)

- DR - (8)
- CB - Community Building (4)
- LH - Luke House (7)
- ML - Masonic Lodge (3)
- MC - Methodist Church
- - Train trips depart here

ROUTE 66 (5 MILES TO ROUTES 28 & 92)

# TOWN OF CASS

304-456-4300 [www.cassrailroad.com](http://www.cassrailroad.com)

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