

Collection #
P 0488
(DVD 0120)

**PENNSYLVANIA RAILROAD SWITCHING YARDS
MOVING IMAGES, 1949–1953**

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Processed by

Kurt Jung
August 8, 2007

Revised by Dorothy A. Nicholson, 1 November 2012
Revised by Barbara Quigley, 27 July 2020

Manuscript and Visual Collections Department
William Henry Smith Memorial Library
Indiana Historical Society
450 West Ohio Street
Indianapolis, IN 46202-3269

www.indianahistory.org

COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF
COLLECTION: 1 DVD

COLLECTION
DATES: 1949–1953

PROVENANCE: Robert C. Boomershine, Indianapolis

RESTRICTIONS: None

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NUMBER: 2000.1246X

NOTES:

HISTORICAL SKETCH

The Pennsylvania Railroad was one of the four major rail systems that served Indiana and operated here until the late 1960s when it was succeeded by Conrail.

Railroad switching yards are used to arrange freight cars for their next destination. These facilities often employ a “hump,” or man-made hill, that allows freight cars to be pushed up to the apex on the entry track then gently rolled down one of several parallel track lines that branch out from the base of the “hump.”

Switching yards also often serve in a maintenance capacity by employing a turntable and roundhouse. A turntable is a section of track mounted to a heavy duty steel truss. This truss is mounted on a central pivot sunk into the ground that is level with incoming and branch tracks. The turntable allows a locomotive to come in on a single track then rotate and move into an open bay of the roundhouse. The roundhouse has a series of maintenance bays arranged in a semicircle around the turntable.

The Logansport switching yard of the Pennsylvania Railroad was built in 1902 on the south side of Logansport. Initial construction gave the facility four receiving tracks and a total capacity to hold 360 cars. Over the years, more tracks were added to keep up with increased traffic.

The Hawthorn Rail Yard was on the southeast side of Indianapolis, just east of the Citizens Gas & Coke ovens. It was constructed in a little over a year beginning in May of 1916. This facility was built as a classification yard and featured a “hump” that was so efficient it began taking freight traffic from a nearby bypass railroad line.

The films in this collection were owned by Ralph D. Boomershine, a Pennsylvania Railroad employee for forty-three years. According to his family he worked in Richmond, Indiana and transferred to Indianapolis when the Richmond facility closed down. He then went to Logansport about 1950. That yard also closed down and he returned to Indianapolis where he worked until his retirement in 1963.

Sources:

Watt, William J., *The Pennsylvania Railroad in Indiana*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, c1999. General Collection: HE2791 .P43 W38 1999.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

This DVD shows activities of the Pennsylvania Railroad Company in Logansport and Indianapolis. It is a compilation made from four black and white, silent, 16mm film reels. The first, second, and fourth titles depict routine rail yard activities in the Logansport switching yard. The third title depicts the Hawthorn Yard on Indianapolis' southeast side.

Title 1: A wall calendar at the beginning dates this film from March 1949. It then shows the front of the Logansport Pennsylvania Railroad depot office. Further footage shows freight operations, a turntable, and a switching engine in action.

Title 2: After an initial scene of a large group of men eating in a restaurant, likely a gathering of Pennsylvania Railroad employees, the film shows activities of a few PRR locomotives at the Logansport switching yard, including operation of the turntable and roundhouse.

Title 3: Shows activities at the Indianapolis Hawthorn Yard. Attention is paid to the switching hump and accompanying office. The turntable and roundhouse are also featured in action.

Title 4: Begins with a shot of the Logansport PRR office, and then shows passenger trains making a stop along a city street. Rather dimly lit footage follows railroad employees at their various office duties. The rest of the film shows trains in operation, men at work in various maintenance tasks, and finishes with a derailment.

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Title 1:
Pennsylvania Railroad in Logansport March 1949;
switching yard.

Title 2:
Pennsylvania Railroad and flood in Logansport
1940's; switching yard, flooded neighborhood street.

Title 3:
Pennsylvania Railroad in Indianapolis' Hawthorn
Switching Yards 1953; features turntable, roundhouse,
and hump.

Title 4:
Pennsylvania Railroad in Logansport 1949–1951; passenger
lines in the city, rail depot office, freight yard and office,
derailment.

CONTAINER

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