

## Memories from the Worthington Tower – Part I

In the 1950's there was one Worthington tower operator who was welcoming to railfans and would let them visit when he was on duty. His name was Glenn Zigler and he often worked the second trick (3:30pm-10:30pm). Glenn would patiently answer questions and let you know what was going on. Your role was to be good company and keep quiet when things got hectic. Here are a few stories from time with Glenn.

### Ryan Hoover - Action at Worthington

As a boy and adolescent in 1953-1957, I spent many a day at Worthington Tower (WT) just a quarter-mile from my home. WT was indeed a PRR "Armstrong" interlocking plant and its operators were all Pennsy employees. It controlled the crossing of the PRR Sandusky Branch and the Big Four CCC&StL main line. WT also controlled the NYC passing siding just north of the crossing and the PRR crossovers between the double tracks just east and west of the NYC crossing. PRR signals were upper quadrant semaphores also controlled by WT. WT operators routinely stopped Pennsy coal drags to allow NYC passenger and baggage-mail-express trains right-of-way. Pennsy coal trains north to Sandusky and empties south were numerous March-November when Lake Erie wasn't frozen. There were a few local and general freights but the primary purpose of the branch was to ferry coal from C&O, N&W, L&N (from Cincinnati) and Virginian (via N&W) north to the lakes.

I remember a very busy late afternoon at WT once in the summer of 1955. A J1 with an I1 "snapper" (helper) on a mixed road coal drag out of Grogan Yard was stopped at the tower to let an NYC express with a Hudson through the plant northbound, just as a southbound J1 helper eased up to the plant from the north. The PRR semaphores stayed horizontal, though, since a southbound NYC express was waiting in the passing siding. WT gave that train clearance and it proceeded south with an L3 Mohawk. Finally, the operator cleared the northbound drag as the southbound J1 helper headed on across the diamonds tender first. Finally, a few minutes later, a Pennsy H10 on a local freight also clattered over the crossing south toward Columbus.

During the summer, WT interlocking could be a very busy place. On occasion, a friendly operator (Glenn Zigler: see introduction above) would let me come up in the tower and even throw a few levers. Those great PRR calendars always hung on the walls and I have yellow "flimsies" (19-order copies) from coal extras headed by J1 6488 and AT&SF Texas 5032 in July 1956 (see below for examples). I also saw the *X-plorer* pass through the interlocking a couple of times. NYC Niagaras were the prized power to catch there.

### Ryan Hoover – More Experiences Near Worthington Tower

These three events occurred at Lincoln Avenue which crossed the Sandusky Branch and Big Four about one-half mile south of Worthington Tower. I was always a die-hard

railfan from about age 3. Unlike other kids, I didn't play sports or engage in other social activities. I spent a lot of time around the railroads in the vicinity of Worthington Tower since it was only about 4 blocks from my home. My mother was always concerned for my safety so I didn't often tell her where I was going. But I was a teenaged fanatic about trains, especially steam, knowing that it was on the way out. I trespassed on railroad rights of way (ROW) too many times, and two of these experiences tell us that it is foolish and dangerous to be on working railroad property. Today, I'd be called a "foamer" (fanatically overactive maniacally enthusiastic railfan) or a "foamite" (fanatically overactive maniacally insane train enthusiast). The bottom line is, you can be a railfan but use common sense, obey the law and stay off of railroad property unless you're accompanied by employees or have a signed permit and release absolving the railroad of responsibility if you're injured.

### **Ryan Hoover - April 1955 — Screeching J1s and a near miss from a NYC Mohawk**

I was 15. My brother and I were watching trains at Lincoln Ave. A double-headed coal train was coming north on the Sandusky line. J1 Texas locomotives had cylinder cocks that, when open, made a loud "screech, screech" sounding like something was badly in need of lubrication. The wind was blowing from the south. We were standing on the Big Four mainline just south of Lincoln. Unbeknown to us, a NYC Mohawk was bearing down on us at 80 mph from the north, but the loud "squeaking" and exhausts from two J1's working all out, plus the south wind, masked the sound of the Central whistle. A "hinky" feeling caused us to glance north and we dove off the Big Four ROW into the ditch alongside just as the mail-express train roared past, still whistling at us. Moral: stay off of railroad tracks. Railroads are dangerous and totally unforgiving to people, animals and motor vehicles. Shaking, we departed for home, vowing to never trespass on the tracks again.

### **Ryan Hoover - Summer 1955 – a J1 stalls at Worthington**

One summer evening in 1955, as I was walking to Boy Scout meeting at nearby Sharon School, I kept hearing what sounded like a J1 stalled and spinning out over and over. I diverted my course to Lincoln Ave. where, sure enough, a J1 with a coal drag kept losing traction, taking in the slack and trying again. The unusual thing was that this train was heading north on No.2 track – the southbound track. Each loss of footing with violent spinning sent showers of sparks around each driving wheel and spraying back beyond the end of the tender. Sparks flew up the stack, too, since the stoker was running continuously. The fireworks were impressive. Boosters had long been removed from these engines but one might have made the difference in this case.

After about six more attempts, the crew gave up and coasted backward enough to clear the Lincoln grade crossing with a brakeman directing traffic. After about 10 minutes, another J1 came south and couple to the front of the stalled engine, nose-to-nose. It had been cut off of an empty drag just north of Worthington Tower interlocking to help the stalled train resume its course. The engineer of the helper was really mad – he must

have looking forward to carding off and going home to a new TV and a cold beer. With much yelling and cussing, the hoppers coordinated with each other by relaying intentions across the cabs to their firemen who then shouted and waved to the engineers of the other locomotives.

After a couple of attempts the odd assemblage managed to get the train started. They crossed over from the southbound to northbound track at Worthington. I don't know whether the helper went all the way to Lewis Center, but he probably did since it was the next crossover where helpers could cut off.

There were many indentations in the rails where the J1 slipped and steel was ground away as sparks with each wild spin. Those indentations remained there for nine years until the N&W bought the Sandusky line and relaid the track with continuously-welded ribbon rail.

### **Ryan Hoover - November 1957 – Another J1 stall, a Big-4 signal malfunction, and a visit with the police**

My brother and I had just finished a Boy Scout Merit Badge exercise in Lincoln Ave. woods when I heard a J1 stalled and slipping south of Morse Road. My brother went home, but I wandered up to the railroad tracks to watch this episode play out. The semaphores were set against the PRR to give ROW to NYC passenger and express trains. A Mohawk was approaching from the south but was stopped with a red signal just south of the Worthington Tower PRR crossing. This seemed odd, since there was no other traffic in the vicinity.

I walked up and down the PRR line waiting for the train to restart with a helper. Finally, a wisp of smoke way to the south meant a helper was coming. It stopped at the far end of the train. This was going to be a snapper (PRR lingo for pusher), I thought. I heard the lead J1 whistle in the flagman and a signal to start. The train reached Lincoln as I began walking back toward the crossing. Just then, a Worthington police cruiser pulled up. They asked me what I was doing there and I explained. They asked me to get into the car while they waited for the coal train to pass. Sure enough, another J1 was pushing behind the cabin (PRR lingo for caboose). This was unusual, since Ohio law said a helper locomotive had to be at the head end or pushing from in front of the caboose. As the train cleared, the police drove off with me inside.

At the Worthington police station, they took me in a questioned me for a while. I explained that I had been working on a Scout project and that I liked trains, and was waiting for the stalled train to start and pass. They asked me if I had a model railroad with electric signals. I said yes. They asked me to empty my pockets to make sure I had nothing to cause a short circuit with. They explained that the operator at Worthington Tower had noticed the Big Four signal malfunction and had spotted me along the tracks. He took the better part of valor and called the Worthington cops. The suspicion was that

I tampered with the signals. Of course, I would never do such a thing and I explained that I had noticed the problem, too, and was wondering about it.

I guess I convinced them that I was innocent and they took me home. They advised my mother that I was not to be on railroad property. Of course, the next day, I was back watching trains, but at least tried to stay on public property. This story emphasizes that it is dangerous to trespass on railroad rights-of-way. Train watching should always be done from public streets, roads and stations.

## Flimsies - Train Order Form 19

Train orders were made in triplicate with the engineer and conductor usually receiving their copy by train hoop and the tower operator retaining a copy for his files. Here are two examples from 1956.

FORM 19 THE PENNSYLVANIA RAILROAD CT262 2MM 6 3/4 x 7 1/4 11-13-50 FORM 19  
TRAIN ORDER No. 604  
SUPERINTENDENTS OFFICE July 1 1956

To C + E Extra 5032 South + Opr.

At Worthington

Extra 5032 South has right  
over opposing trains on No 1  
track Worthington to  
North Fields.

J. E. W.

Made Complete Time 2:32 A M. Operator P. E. Bruce

A train order written by the Worthington operator on July 1, 1956 for a coal extra with leased Santa Fe 2-10-4 # 5032, which went into storage on July 3. It returned to service August 17. There was a steel strike July 1-August 9 which laid up the lake boats. Note the time, 2:32 am, with operator P.E. Bruce on the "owl" trick.



FORM  
19

THE PENNSYLVANIA RAILROAD

CT262  
2MM  
6 3/4 x 7 3/4 11-13-50

FORM  
19

TRAIN ORDER No. 609

July 30 1956

SUPERINTENDENTS OFFICE

To C & E Extra 6488 North + Opn

At Worthington

Extra 6488 North has right  
over opposing trains on No 2  
track Worthington to Toyton

J. E. W.

Made Complete Time 2:38 a M. Operator P. E. Bruce

Train order to extra with PRR, 2-10-4 #6488. On July 30, the steel strike was still on, but the five active j1's handled the occasional freight. Operator P.E. Bruce at 2:38am.

Train orders from the Ryan Hoover collection.