

Documentary outline & treatment on the history of rail in Indiana

Version #4 rev. 5/21/15

Working title: *Indiana Railroads – Ghosts of the Past, Present and Future*

Writer/Producer: Jim Krause

Audience: Primarily Indiana PBS viewers. Will also appeal to national PBS & APT audiences.

Length: 56:46 (plus membership version containing two find drive breaks)

Description: This documentary explores the history, impact and future of railroads in Indiana. It will look at the railroad system's life story (birth, heyday, and eventual downsizing), its impact on towns, and visit with people, both past and present whose lives were in some way affected by the railroad. It will examine the factors that led to a decline in both miles of track and passenger railroad's popularity. We'll travel along historic train routes, some which are now converted to rail trails. The documentary will also look at present day rail systems across the country and around the globe. A revamped train system in the Midwest could provide a solution to growing transportation needs and help reduce our nation's carbon footprint.

Overview - Pitch

Trains – Sometimes they carry freight, sometimes people- but trains have always been loaded with symbolism and intrigue. Trains suggest travel to faraway places, pioneer expansion into the west, backdrops for romance, and targets for robbers. They are also practical means of moving freight and getting to work.

Before the commonplace use of the automobile, trains were often the only way in or out of town. They brought mail, food, packages, and provided a vital connection to the outside world, connecting Hoosier towns to St Louis, Chicago, Detroit and New York. In the 1800s, the rail lines helped influence the growth of many Indiana towns. Fort Wayne, Washington, Madison, and Indianapolis owe much of their early character and history to the railroad.

The Midwest passenger trains that once linked a network of rural farm communities are now ghosts from the past. A few passenger lines remain- but the majority of track in the Hoosier state is dedicated to freight. However organizations and spirited individuals are pushing for a revival of passenger rail. High-speed trains, commonplace in other parts of the world and in our nation, might find their way to Indiana.

Revisit the trains from the past, ride the rails of today, and look at the future of our railroads on *Indiana Railroads – Ghosts of the Past, Present and Future*.

Treatment

Scene 1 – Introduction

Riding a present day commuter train, a VO introduces the topic. Trains carry freight, people, history, and symbolism. A VO and video clips touch on examples of trains in the history of our society (Clips from classic films, such as Great Train Robbery, Butch Cassidy and the

Sundance Kid, Strangers on a Train, Murder on the Orient Express are interspersed with news footage and file footage of passenger and freight trains). Some of that history started right here in Indiana.

Title Sequence

Scene 2 – The Little Engine(s) That Could

We look at the very first train that came through Indiana and who was on it (Governor James Wallace). This spurred the growth of the rail system in Indiana. (Could include the first train robbery, which some attribute to the Reno Gang, who robbed a train leaving Seymour.) By 1900 interurban trains were running out of Indianapolis, radiating out to Fort Wayne, Muncie Richmond, Cincinnati and Louisville.

(Interview with James McLary and a few other historians. Will include archival footage, photos, and period music.)

Scene 3 – Rising From the Plains

Almost all towns along the rail line had stations, also known as terminals and depots. A number of towns owe their origins to the railroad. We'll look at how the railroad helped shape some of our favorite Hoosier cities.

(Interviews with city historians. Will feature train stations and depots of Indianapolis, Washington, Logansport, Helmsburg, etc.)

Scene 4 – Heydays

Rail use continued to expand, as did the network of tracks in the Midwest. A map shows the growth of the railroad network and a few historians discuss the birth of competing railroad companies.

Scene 5 - True Stories

We'll profile a few individuals whose lives were deeply impacted by trains and visit with a model railroad enthusiast. (Interviews with train magnate, engineer and model railroad enthusiasts.)

Scene - Hollywood's Romance with Trains

The 1903 movie, *The Great Train Robbery* was considered by some to be the first action film, kicking off the start of the motion picture industry. This section will provide a brief overview of how trains play into a part of American popular culture.

Strangers on a Train, Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid, Once Upon a Time in the West, Throw Momma from a Train, Runaway Train, Murder on the Orient Express, Money Train, Back to the Future, Polar Express.

- - - Fund Drive Break - - -

Scene 6 – Automobiles over Trains

However popular trains were on the silver screen, people's love of trains began to wane. The new love was the automobile. The rise in car ownership coupled with the creation of roads and highways across the nation cut deeply into ridership. This was felt strongly in the heart of the Midwest. (2 historians describe the rise of use of the automobile and its impact on the passenger rail system.)

Scene 7 – Ghost Stories

The retreat of passenger rail service and the removal of miles of track did not go unnoticed. Once vibrant towns and communities began feeling the impact of the loss of a train stop and now faced an uncertain future. (Stories of ghost towns and abandoned train depots.)

Scene 8 – Rising from the Ashes - Rails to Trails

A number of abandoned railroad lines have been re-purposed, and converted into rail trails. Rail trails in cities like Fort Wayne, Indianapolis, Bloomington, and New Albany have injected new life into urban areas and have provided corridors for human-powered transportation and recreation. (We travel to popular rail trails and interview people on the rail trail about how they use and what they like about the trail.) We also get some quick testimonials from trail blazer who have encountered opposition.

(Will include: Jeffersonville - Big Four Bridge & Clarksville Levee Trail; Bloomington - B-line; Indianapolis - Monon Trail; Winimac - Panhandle Pathway)

Scene 9 – Museums: Preserving the Past

We'll visit several train museums in Indiana. We also interview a few passionate historians intent on preserving the legacy and artistry of trains. In Fort Wayne, a dedicated group of volunteers from has preserved historic steam locomotive no. 765, keeping her operational and coordinating outings.

(Noblesville - Indiana Transportation Museum; Elkhart - National New York Central Museum, French Lick Scenic Railway Museum, Fort Wayne Railroad Historical Society)

Scene 10 – Moving People to Places

It's actually possible to get from Indianapolis to New York, Seattle, Canada or Mexico solely by train. Riding the rails provides a unique way to view the countryside in comfort, while enjoying a fine meal and glass of wine. On longer routes you can ride in your very own sleeper cabin. We travel on a few of the three passenger lines operating in Indiana and find out who rides them. We interview rail travelers to hear what they like about riding the train. We also hear from representatives from Amtrak on the challenges they face.

(3 Amtrak lines run through Indiana: Cardinal, Lake Shore Limited, Capitol Limited)

Scene 11 – The Future of Rail

Active freight lines still provide a viable way to transport bulk commercial goods. Representatives from INRD and CSX describe their territory, goods, challenges and hopes

for the future. Maintaining miles of track is challenging. A group of commercial, governmental, and industrial entities coupled with some passionate aficionados are trying to recharge passenger rail service in Indiana. A representative of the Midwest Regional Rail Initiative provides insights into their current mission and projects, which includes plans for high-speed rail. It's environmentally sound and reduces carbon use related to transportation. Could high-speed rail find its way to Indiana?

- - - Fund Drive Break - - -

Scene 12 – Conclusion

Back on the passenger train from the opening we recap the role of trains and their significance to our nation. The future is to be seen, but trains have played a vital part in shaping Indiana and will forever be a part of our history. (Will include a few choice soundbites from the interviewees.)

Scene 13 – Credits