

Johnstown Passenger Railway Company, Car Barns
726 Central Avenue
Johnstown
Cambria County
Pennsylvania

HAER No. PA-258-A

HAER
PA,
11-30-70,
2-A-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Engineering Record
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

JOHNSTOWN PASSENGER RAILWAY COMPANY, CAR BARN

HAER
P.A.
11-5070
2-A-

HAER No. PA-258-A

Location: 726 Central Avenue, Johnstown, Cambria County, Pennsylvania

USGS Quad: Johnstown, Pennsylvania (1:24000)
UTM: 17 E.677220 N.4462800

Date of Construction: 1893

Builders: Tom Johnson
Johnstown Corporation

Present Owner: Cambria County Transit Authority

Present Use: Garage/Office

Project Information: In February 1987, the Historic American Engineering Record (HAER) and the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) began a multi-year historical and architectural documentation project in southwestern Pennsylvania. Carried out in conjunction with America's Industrial Heritage Project (AIHP), HAER undertook a comprehensive inventory of Blair, Cambria, Indiana, Fayette and Westmoreland counties as the first step in identifying the region's surviving historic engineering works and industrial resources.

The results of this project have been published in Blair County and Cambria County, Pennsylvania: An Inventory of Historic Engineering and Industrial Sites (1990), edited by Gray Fitzsimons and produced by HABS/HAER for the National Park Service.

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History:

In 1882 the Johnstown Passenger Railway Company was founded. The system used horse-drawn trolley cars, which operated twenty minutes apart, and passengers were charged a fare of five cents. The offices and barns were originally located in Woodvale, however, they were destroyed in the Flood of 1889. Tom Johnson acquired the company after the flood, and began electrifying the system. In 1890 new car barns and an office were built on Central Avenue in Moxham (the current location of the Johnstown Corporation offices). However, the complex burned in 1893 and was rebuilt at its present location at the corner of Central Avenue and Bond Street. In 1907 the system had 31 miles of track and 110 cars. The company began converting to "trackless trolleys" in 1951, which was completed by 1960. Declining ridership and high costs placed the system in poor financial condition in 1977. The system was purchased by Cambria County and reorganized into the Cambria County Transit Authority. In addition to operating the Johnstown bus system, the authority operates the Inclined Plane and the Johnstown and Stony Creek Railroad.

There are five remaining car barns. The two barns on the northeast corner of Central and Bond have been joined by a continuous brick facade as have the two barns on the southeast corner. The fifth barn is located to the south along the alley. The structures vary in size from 170' x 120', to 280' x 120', to 160' x 50'. They are all two-stories high and have a yellow-brick exterior. (However, the walls on the alley side of each of the barns are constructed with red brick. This may be because red brick was a less expensive material, therefore it was used where it was not seen.) The roof structure is probably steel frame although the ceilings have been dropped and the framing is not visible. The foundations are stone block-in-course. All of the buildings have arched windows which have received a variety of treatments; some have been entirely bricked over; some have been filled with glass block; and others have been replaced with modern windows. The trolley tracks are still visible on the floors of the structures. The buildings are currently used as the main offices of the Transit Authority and for storage and maintenance of the systems's buses.

Sources:

Coleman, Nancy. "The History of Public Transportation," Johnstown: The Story of A Unique Valley. Johnstown Pennsylvania: Johnstown Flood Museum, 1984.

Heinz, Art. "Mass Transit's On An Uphill Run." Johnstown Tribune - Democrat, 5 July 1987, p. C-1.

Rohrbeck, Benson W. Johnstown Traction Company 1882-1960. Westchester, Pennsylvania: Benson Rohrbeck, 1976.