

Perry Frank Johnson Collection

Finding Aid to the Collection at the Center for Railroad Photography & Art

CRP&A | CENTER FOR RAILROAD
PHOTOGRAPHY & ART

Prepared by Adrienne Evans
Last updated: 6/17/2019

Collection Summary

Title: Perry Frank Johnson Collection

Accession Number: 2009.1

Span Dates: 1939-1963

Bulk Dates: 1947-1956

Creator: Johnson, Perry Frank, 1913-2007

Extent: Nine Archival Binders (Three linear feet)

Language: English

Repository: Center for Railroad Photography & Art, Madison, WI

Abstract: This collection is composed of photographic images shot by Perry Frank Johnson (1913-2007). The bulk of the collection was photographed by Johnson, but it also includes items he collected from other rail photographers. Images in the collection depict American railroads, mainly located in Indiana, Illinois, and Ohio.

Selected Search Terms

Country:

Belgium

Canada

France

Germany

United States

State/Province:

Arkansas

British Columbia (Canada)

California

District of Columbia

Colorado

Illinois

Indiana

Iowa

Kentucky

Louisiana

Maryland

Minnesota

New Jersey

Nova Scotia (Canada)

Ohio

Ontario (Canada)

Pennsylvania

Texas

Washington

West Virginia

Wisconsin

Railroad Name:

Akron, Canton and Youngstown
Railroad

Aliquippa and Southern Railroad

Androscoggin and Kennebec Railroad

Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway

Atlantic City Rail Line

Atlantic Coast Line Railroad

Baltimore and Ohio Railroad

Bangor and Aroostook Railroad

Belt Railway Company of Chicago

Bessemer and Lake Erie Railroad

Boston and Maine Railroad

Burlington Northern and Santa Fe
Railway

Cambria and Indiana Railroad

Canadian National Railway

Canadian Pacific Railroad

Chesapeake and Ohio Railway

Chicago Aurora and Elgin Railroad

Chicago, Burlington and Quincy
Railroad

Chicago and Eastern Illinois Railroad

Chicago Great Western Railway

Chicago and Illinois Midland Railroad

Chicago and Illinois Western Railroad

Chicago, Indianapolis and Louisville
Railway

Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul and
Pacific Railroad

Chicago and North Western Railway

Chicago North Shore and Milwaukee
Railroad

Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific
Railroad

Chicago South Shore and South Bend
Railroad

Chicago Terminal Railroad

Chicago Transit Authority

Cleveland Transit System

Clinchfield Railroad

Columbus and Greenville Railway

CSX Railroad

Delaware, Lackawanna and Western
Railroad

Denver and Rio Grande Western
Railroad

Des Moines Gary Railway

Detroit, Toledo and Ironton Railroad

Elgin, Joliet and Eastern Railway

Erie Railroad

Grand Trunk Western Railroad

Great Northern Railroad

Green Bay and Western Railroad

Gulf, Mobile and Ohio Railroad

Illinois Central Railroad

Illinois Terminal Railroad

Indiana Harbor Belt Railroad

Kansas City Southern Railway

Lafayette Street Railway

Lake Erie and Western Railroad

Lake Shore Electric Railway

Lake Superior and Ishpeming Railroad

Lehigh Valley Transit Company

Louisville and Nashville Railroad;

Michigan Central Railroad

Middle Fork Railroad

Milwaukee Electric Railway Company;

Minneapolis and St. Louis Railway

Minneapolis, St. Paul and Sault Ste.
Marie Railroad

Missouri Pacific Railroad

Monon Railroad

Montour Railroad

Nashville, Chattanooga and St. Louis
Railway

New York Central Railroad

New York, Chicago and St. Louis
Railroad

New York, New Haven and Hartford
Railroad

Norfolk Southern Railway

Northern Pacific Railway

Peoria and Eastern Railway

Pere Marquette Railway

Pennsylvania Railroad

Pittsburgh and Lake Erie Railroad

Pittsburgh Railways

Pittsburgh and West Virginia Railway
Reading Railroad
Rio Grande Southern Railroad
Shaker Heights Rapid Transit
Sierra Railroad Company
Southern Pacific Railroad
Texas and Pacific Railway
Toledo and Ohio Central Railway
Toledo Terminal Railroad
Toronto, Hamilton and Buffalo Railway

Union Pacific Railroad
Union Traction Company
Virginian Railway
Wabash Railroad
Washington Metropolitan Area Transit
Authority
Western Pacific Railroad
West Side Lumber Company Railway
Yosemite Valley Railroad
Yreka Western Railroad

Administrative Information

Provenance

Donated by Dorthea Nance Johnson (1916-2013) in 2009.

Processing History

The collection was donated to the Center for Railroad Photography and Art (CRPA) in 2009. CRPA interns Nicole Banes, Aviva Gellman, and Philip Windsor processed the majority of the collection in 2015. Volunteer John Kelley processed the last box in the collection in 2019.

Additional Notes

Selected photographs are publicly available on the Center's website and Flickr account.

Several photographs in the collection were not shot by Perry Frank Johnson. Additional photographers include:

Charles Able
Don Baringer
Allen Bauer
Edward Beaver
Jim Carter
O. Goessi

Leonard Lucy
D.L. Maddock
Malcolm McCarter
Donald Ross
W.J. Stevenson

Copyright Status

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Access and Restrictions

For educational use only, please contact the Center for other usage requests.

Biographical Note

Perry Frank Johnson (1913-2007) was born to Lawrence and Myrtle Johnson on December 22, 1913, in Wellington, Ontario, Canada. The family later moved to the United States. Johnson spent his boyhood in Fort Wayne, Indiana, and began watching trains along the Nickel Plate Railroad in second grade. When he was older, he hiked to view trains along the Nickel Plate, Pennsylvania, and Wabash lines. In the late 1930's, Johnson moved to Franklin, Indiana, to pursue a bachelor's degree in biology at Franklin College.

In the Spring of 1942, Johnson's wife, Dorthea Nance Johnson (1916-2013), first encouraged him to photograph trains by shooting a few train photographs of her own. Then, World War II and Army service at the headquarters of an armored division in Europe intervened from 1942 through 1945. But, once he was back home in the United States, on March 1, 1946, Johnson finally began his years-long rail-photography avocation, writing, "One has to start somewhere if he is to take action pictures of railroad subjects, and after putting it off for a while I started here—on 11th St. in Michigan City, Indiana," where he was working for the YMCA.

In 1948, the Johnsons moved to Elyria, Ohio. From 1948 to 1961, Johnson was employed as the YMCA Boy's Work Director and ran Camp Iss-See-Kes Nature Museum each summer. Dorthea Johnson, meanwhile, began teaching first grade in 1955, and completed an MA in Education in 1957. She would go on to serve as Principal at Maplewood School in 1962. Around the same time, Johnson joined the new Lorain County Metro Parks System as their first naturalist—he would later become chief naturalist when the department expanded. His job included editing the department's newsletter, "Arrowhead," and photographing the parks. Perry helped design the Wildlife Observation Center Area in the Carlisle Visiting Center. The Park system named the visitors center at the Sandy Ridge Reservation the Perry F. Johnson Wetlands Center. Johnson retired in 1984.

Johnson shot the majority of his railroad photographs during the 1940's and 1950's. First, largely in northern Indiana, in and around Michigan City, and later, in northeastern Ohio, in and around Elyria, after the Johnsons relocated in 1948. Johnson printed and mounted his photographs in several albums--the early ones include Johnson's own typewritten descriptions of each image. He would later abandon this habit, however. When capturing subjects, Johnson did not discriminate among steam, electric, and diesel locomotives. He shot what he saw locally, sometimes with people in the images.

In retirement, Johnson led bird walks in Cascade Park for many years, and he was one of the founding members of the Elyria Audubon Society. He served many terms as President of the Black River Audubon Society, and he edited the Society's newsletter, "Wingtips". Perry passed away in 2007 and in 2009, Dorthea Johnson donated his railroad materials to the Center for Railroad Photography and Art.

Scope and Content Note

This collection contains photographic material created by Perry Frank Johnson (1913-2007). The bulk of the collection consists of 4912 black and white photographs shot primarily between 1947 and 1956 that depict portrait and action shots of locomotives near Johnson's residences in Michigan City, Indiana, and Elyria, Ohio. Other photographic material in the collection includes a small selection railroad images that Johnson collected or traded other photographers for. Several of these images depict railroad operations in Western Europe near the end of World War II in Manheim and Darmstadt, Germany; Brussels, Belgium, and Versailles, France. The collection images were originally bound in several scrapbooks.

Arrangement of the Collection

Collection maintains arrangement of the photographs' creator, Perry Frank Johnson, 1913-2007.

Container List

<i>Box</i>	<i>Pages</i>	<i>Contents</i>
Johnson-01	001-100	1946-1947, Indiana, Chicago and Eastern Illinois Railroad; Chicago; Indianapolis, and Louisville Railway; Chicago South Shore and South Bend Railroad; Grand Trunk Western Railroad; Michigan Central Railroad; Monon Railroad; New York Central Railroad; New York, Chicago and St. Louis Railroad; Pere Marquette Railway; Wabash Railroad
Johnson-02	001-079	1946-1947, Indiana Boston and Maine Railroad; Chicago, Indianapolis, and Louisville Railway; Chicago South Shore and South Bend Railroad; Monon Railroad; New York Central Railroad; New York, Chicago and St. Louis Railroad; New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad; Pere Marquette Railway
Johnson-03	001-134	1946-1948, Illinois; Indiana; Ohio Chicago Aurora and Elgin Railroad, Chicago; Indianapolis and Louisville Railway; Chicago and North Western Railway;

<i>Box</i>	<i>Pages</i>	<i>Contents</i>
Johnson-03	001-134	Chicago South Shore and South Bend Railroad; Chicago Terminal Railroad; Erie Railroad, Illinois Central Railroad; Indiana Harbor Belt Railroad; Michigan Central Railroad, New York Central Railroad; Norfolk Southern Railway; Pere Marquette Railway
Johnson-04	001-103	1947-1960, Arkansas; California; Colorado; Illinois; Indiana; Kentucky; Louisiana; Minnesota; Ohio; Pennsylvania; West Virginia; Washington; Wisconsin; Baltimore and Ohio Railroad; Chicago, Indianapolis and Louisville Railway; Chicago, South Shore and South Bend Railroad; Illinois Central Railroad; Indiana Harbor Belt Railroad; Kansas City Southern Railway; Lake Superior and Ishpeming Railroad; Louisville and Nashville Railroad; Maine Central Railroad; Middle Fork Railroad; Minneapolis and St. Louis Railway; Minneapolis, St. Paul and Sault Ste. Marie Railroad; Missouri Pacific Railroad; Monon Railroad; Montour Railroad; Nashville, Chattanooga and St. Louis Railway; New York Central; New York, Chicago and St. Louis Railroad; New York, New Haven, and Hartford Railroad; Norfolk and Western Railway; Northern Pacific Railway; Peoria and Eastern Railway; Pennsylvania Railroad; Pittsburgh and West Virginia Railway; Pittsburgh and Lake Erie Railroad
Johnson-05	001-063	1941-1949 Indiana; Illinois; Ohio; Ontario (Canada) Baltimore and Ohio Railroad; Canadian Pacific Railway; Chicago and Eastern Illinois Railroad; Chicago, South Shore and South Bend Railway; Illinois Central Railroad; Indiana Harbor Belt Railroad; Lake Erie and Western Railroad New York Central Railroad; New York, Chicago and St. Louis Railroad; Pennsylvania Railroad;

<i>Box</i>	<i>Pages</i>	<i>Contents</i>
Johnson-05	001-063	Pere Marquette Railway; Wabash Railway
Johnson-06	001-156	1946-1949 Indiana; Ohio Chicago, Indianapolis & Louisville Railroad; Chicago, South Shore and South Bend Railroad; Grand Trunk Western Railroad; Michigan Central Railroad; Monon Railroad; New York Central Railroad; Norfolk Southern Railway; Pere Marquette Railroad
Johnson-07	001-175	1946-1959 British Columbia (Canada); California; Illinois; Indiana; Massachusetts; Michigan; Kentucky; Ohio; Ontario (Canada); Nova Scotia (Canada); Pennsylvania; Utah; Virginia; West Virginia; Wisconsin; Akron, Canton and Youngstown Railroad; Aliquippa and Southern Railroad; Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway; Atlantic Coast Line Railroad; Baltimore and Ohio Railroad; Bangor and Aroostook Railroad; Belt Railway Company of Chicago; Bessemer and Lake Erie Railroad; Boston and Maine Railroad; Cambria and Indiana Railroad; Canadian National Railway; Canadian Pacific Railway; Chesapeake and Ohio Railway; Chicago and Eastern Illinois Railroad; Chicago and Illinois Western Railroad; Chicago and Illinois Midland Railroad; Chicago, Indianapolis, and Louisville Railway; Chicago and North Western Railway; Chicago South Shore and South Bend Railroad; Clinchfield Railroad; Columbus and Greenville Railway; New York Central Railroad
Johnson-08	001-1096	1950-1956 Michigan; New York; Ohio New York Central Railroad
Johnson-09	001-104	1946-1961 Illinois; Indiana; Ohio Chicago, Indianapolis and Louisville Railroad; Chicago South Shore and South Bend Railroad;

<i>Box</i>	<i>Pages</i>	<i>Contents</i>
Johnson-09	001-104	Grand Trunk Western Railroad; Illinois Central Railroad, Indiana Harbor Belt Railroad; Michigan Central Railroad; Monon Railroad; New York Central Railroad; New York, Chicago and St. Louis Railroad; Pennsylvania Railroad
Johnson-10	001-096	1948-1963 California; Colorado; Florida; Idaho; Illinois; Indiana; Louisiana; Missouri; Nebraska; Ohio; Oregon; Pennsylvania; Texas; Washington Baltimore and Ohio Railroad; Burlington Northern and Santa Fe Railway; Chicago, Indianapolis and Louisville Railroad; CSX Railroad, Monon Railroad; New York Central Railroad; Reading Railroad; Rio Grande Southern; Sierra Railroad Company; Southern Pacific Railroad; Texas and Pacific Railway; Toledo Terminal Railroad; Toronto, Hamilton and Buffalo Railway; Union Pacific Railroad; Virginian Railway; Western Pacific Railroad; West Side Lumber Company Railway; Yosemite Valley Railroad; Yreka Western Railroad
Johnson-11	001-113	1948-1957 Indiana; Ohio; Pennsylvania Baltimore and Ohio Railroad; Canadian Pacific Railway; Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific Railroad; Chicago, South Shore and South Bend Railroad; Erie Railroad; New York Central Railroad; New York, Chicago and St. Louis Railroad
Johnson-12	001-104	1947-1960 California; Colorado; Illinois; Indiana; New Jersey; New York; Ohio; Ontario (Canada); Ottawa (Canada); Pennsylvania Washington; Utah; Wisconsin Baltimore and Ohio Railroad; Canadian National Railway; Chicago Aurora and Elgin Railroad; Chicago, Burlington and Quincy Railroad, Chicago Great Western Railway; Chicago, Indianapolis and Louisville Railway; Chicago, Milwaukee,

<i>Box</i>	<i>Pages</i>	<i>Contents</i>
Johnson-12	001-104	St. Paul and Pacific Railroad; Chicago North Shore and Milwaukee Railroad; Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific Railroad; Chicago Transit Authority; Cleveland Transit System; CSX Transportation Company; Delaware, Lackawanna and Western Railroad; Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad; Detroit, Toledo and Ironton Railroad; Elgin, Joliet and Eastern Railway; Erie Railroad; Grand Trunk Western Railroad; Great Northern Railroad; Green Bay and Western Railroad; Gulf, Mobile, and Ohio Railroad; Michigan Central Railroad; Monon Railroad; New York, Chicago and St. Louis Railroad; New York Central Railroad; Norfolk Southern Railway; Toledo and Ohio Central Railway; Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority
Johnson-13	001-128	1948-1962 Indiana; Ohio; Wisconsin Akron, Canton and Youngstown Railroad; Baltimore and Ohio Railroad; Chicago North Shore and Milwaukee Railroad; Chicago South Shore and South Bend Railroad; CSX Transportation; New York Central Railroad; Norfolk Southern Railway; Pennsylvania Railroad
Johnson-14	001-047	1939-1945 Belgium; France; Germany; United States—California; District of Columbia; Illinois; Indiana; Iowa; Maryland; Minnesota; New Jersey; Ohio; Pennsylvania; Texas; Wisconsin Androscoggin and Kennebec Railroad; Atlantic City Rail; Chicago Aurora and Elgin Railroad; Chicago, North Shore and Milwaukee Railroad; Chicago, South Shore and South Bend Railroad; Des Moines Gary Railway; Milwaukee Electric Railway Company; Illinois Terminal Railroad; Lafayette Street Railway; Lake Shore Electric Railway; Lehigh Valley Transit Company; Pittsburgh Railways;

<i>Box</i>	<i>Pages</i>	<i>Contents</i>
Johnson-14	001-047	Shaker Heights Rapid Transit; Union Traction Company