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Lehigh Valley Railroad Company journal box
cover

TOURING SULLIVAN COUNTY'S
MUSEUM . . . while dusting

A journal box is a housing unit in a rail truck's wheel and axle assembly designed to hold the supply of oil for the axle and the axle's journal bearings. These journal bearings are actually a part of the axle, and are a type of bearing that doesn't actually move independently from the wheel.



Per research: US-style railroad truck with journal bearings inside journal boxes. A “hot box” is the term used when an axle bearing overheats on a piece of railway rolling stock. The term is derived from the journal-bearing trucks used before the mid-20th century.

Journal boxes were originally made of mahogany and the padding was that of rags that were then saturated with oil to “grease the (each) wheels”. If the lubricant was not kept up then the wheels would throw sparks that could then catch the railroad ties or the cars they were placed on on fire.

We tell you all this because we got an email from the PA Game Commission about a piece found on State Game Lands 57. It turns out to be a journal box cover of cast iron, weighing about 15 pounds (that's just the lid). The lid was not only to hold the rags in but also to keep debris out. Checking with railroad enthusiast they came up with North Mountain having had tracks from approximately 1890 to 1913 for Lehigh Valley Railroad. What made this become even more interesting is that stamped into this cover are the initials LVRRCO. The researcher who has a collection of journal boxes stated that he has none that end in the “CO” which places this piece even earlier than 1890 as its maker date.

Many of us still walk or hike the abandoned railroad beds today and find any amount of sundry artifacts connected to the days of old. But for a find such as this one it does enlighten us to the pit falls and solutions utilized in by gone times. This piece will be added to the history of Sullivan County here at YOUR museum located in Laporte, behind the courthouse.

For an appointment phone 570-946-5020 or email us at museum@scpahistory.com. You can also visit our web site at www.scpahistory.com and please like us on Facebook.