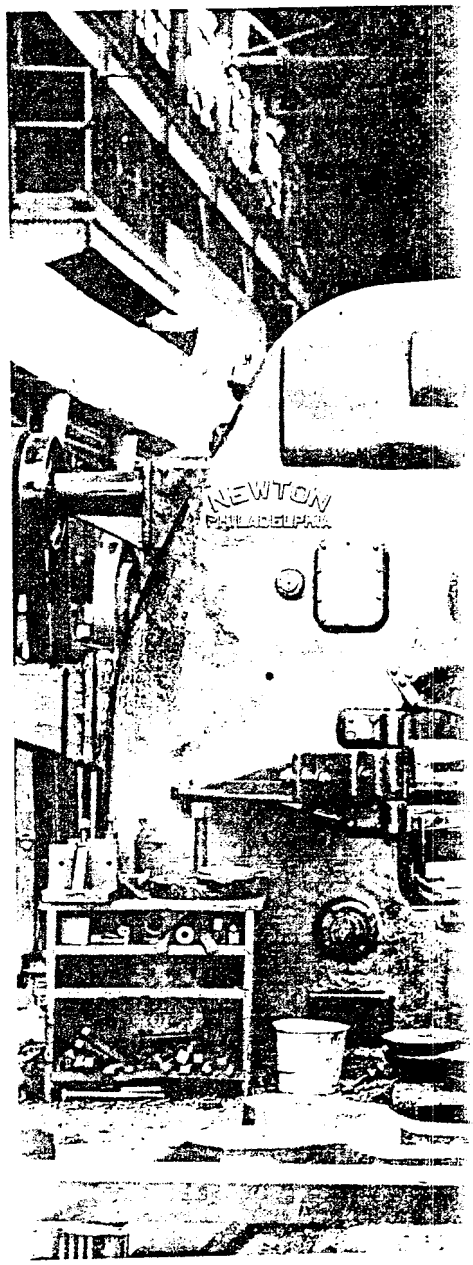
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DOCUMENT DESCRIPTION: Trade Journal Excerpt from Locomotive & Railway Preservation

Of course, there were liabilities in locomotive-shop work. Men were fired at the whim of shop foremen or because of minor indiscretions. Serious accidents occurred with large machine tools and because of heavy machinery moving overhead. Eye injuries from metal shavings were common. Asbestos was used for boiler jacketing, and many men suffered hearing loss from the intense noise that permeated most shops—only as adults did many people discover that their fathers' loud voices were not the products of angry demeanors. In addition, Lima workers did not share any of the health and pension benefits of organized labor until 1942, a marked contrast to the long tradition of organized labor in railway occupations. (The employment of many area farmers as seasonal workers may have contributed to this phenomenon. Farmers are remembered as excellent boilermakers and machinists, but their primary loyalties would have been to the family farm.) And African Americans, who have represented nearly 24 percent of Lima's population since 1940, were denied employment at The Loco except as custodial workers, although they were recruited to work at the Ohio Steel Foundry in the manufacture of miscellaneous railroad castings.



Because of the liabilities of work at The Loco, many of the skills that Lima workers learned as part of a long, informal apprenticeship were used to help each other. The ability to make and work with tools became part of a network of exchange that extended beyond the shop floor as workers helped each other provide some of life's necessities and flourishes. Appliances, furniture, fishing equipment, and food were all sold at The Loco. Many items were manufactured from materials salvaged from the plant. This sense of mutual aid permeated life at The Loco and contributed to the memory of "being a family" that is shared by many former workers. Wages lower than most of those in the railroad industry were to some degree offset by corporate sensitivity to family concerns during the layoffs that accompanied the up-and-down cycles of a transportation industry. Many workers remember being laid off or rehired on the basis of who had the most children rather than on the basis of strict seniority:

> *I reached my teenage years in the 1930s, and I'd go to the Lima Locomotive Works to hunt a job, and there'd be a line of men there—200 men in a line. And the guy would come out and he'd say, "I'm gonna hire married men with children today. I'm gonna hire three. Now who's got five kids?" And some guy would holler out, "Well, I've got six." And he'd hire him. And he'd say, "Who's got five?" Nobody would say, so he'd yell out, "Who's got four?" And some guy would say, "Well, I got four kids." And they said,"Well, we'll hire you." And so on until he'd hire a man with three children.*

Some students of the organization of work have suggested that American industrial organization of the future will resemble the craftlike organization of the Lima Locomotive Works if it is to be competitive in world markets. They have also suggested that these new models will not be successful if they are conceived in a cultural vacuum. What made Lima flourish was its embeddedness in a cultural system that knit together neighborhood, community, and workplace, allowing individuals to work together to build some of the finest transportation machines in history. Many Lima residents still say "We built the best"; if this is so, it is because three generations of Lima workers labored together in a unique industrial workplace and shared a satisfying life in neighborhoods whose economic and social vitality was symbolized by the massive brick structures of the Lima Locomotive Works and the thousands of locomotives built there.

Descriptions and impressions of working at The Loco during the steam era have been drawn from interviews of many individuals who were part of the ongoing "Memory Engines" oral-history project in Lima/Allen County, Ohio.

In particular, the author would like to acknowledge the contributions of the following individuals: John Adams, boilermaker; Charles Cunningham, machinist and superintendent of Shovels and Cranes; Robert and Betty Keller, for their knowledge of the locomotive works "family"; Harry Patton, overhead crane operator; Joe Park, machinist; and Charles Schnell, machinist-boilermaker and former superintendent of the Lima Locomotive Works. Thanks to these and many others, the Lima story can be preserved and retold. Any errors in fact rest solely with the author.

Hans Houshouwer, who holds a Ph.D. in anthropology from the University of Washington at Seattle, is folklorist/historian for American House, Inc. In his drive to understand occupational traditions and work processes, he studies the broad cultural connections among the workplace, the community, and regional and national history.

References

All interview excerpts are from the Memory Engines collection of American House, Inc.

p. 19: Adams, John. Interview with Andrew Gulliford, December 1, 1986.

p. 29: Cunningham, Charles. Interview with author, March 16, 1988.

p. 30: Riker, Lafe. Interview with Andrew Gulliford, December 11, 1986.

p. 31: Miller, R. G. Interview with Andrew Gulliford, December 2, 1986.

p. 32, 1st sentence: Derber, Charles. *"Crafting America's Future: Working in 1990 and Beyond."* Symposium in Lima, Ohio, May 8,1983

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