PROJECT SCROLL RESEARCH NOTE 2026-57

No trains to Shipshewana from April 1975 to June 1979: the embargo on the Penn Central branch and the Indiana Interstate Railway

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SUMMARY

The usual account has a federal subsidy keeping the Goshen–Shipshewana branch running from 1976. The Federal Register shows that the trains had stopped. An embargo on all traffic over the branch, "effective April 21, 1975," followed the Penn Central's stopping all operations "because of unsafe track conditions," and "Rail service had not been resumed as of December, 1976." Service came back in 1979, after the State of Indiana leased the line from the Penn Central Corporation: the Interstate Commerce Commission's Service Order 1381, decided 12 June 1979, authorized the Indiana Interstate Railway to operate between Goshen and Shipshewana from 11:59 p.m. on 15 June 1979, noting that service had been "discontinued for several years." The county history of 1982 records for 1979 that "The first freight begins to move on the Pumpkin Vine Line between Shipshewana and Goshen."

THE RECORD

1. ***Federal Register* 42 (22 February 1977), Rail Services Planning Office, line-by-line analysis, USRA Line No. 399: Shipshewana Branch**

   > *"the Penn Central stopped all operations over the Branch because of unsafe track conditions. An embargo notice (No. 14-75) was issued on all traffic, effective April 21, 1975, to or from all stations on the line except Goshen. Rail service had not been resumed as of December, 1976."*

   Internet Archive · See the record (https://archive.org/details/sim_federal-register-find_1977-02-22_42_35_1)

2. **Interstate Commerce Commission, Service Order No. 1381, *Federal Register* 44 (19 June 1979), p. 35227**

   > *"Indiana Interstate Railway Company, Inc., is authorized to operate over former tracks of Penn Central between Goshen, Indiana, and Shipshewana, Indiana. DATES: Effective 11:59 p.m., June 15, 1979 ... Railroad service on the former Shipshewana Branch ... has been discontinued for several years. The State of Indiana has leased this line from The Penn Central Corporation"*

   Internet Archive · See the record (https://archive.org/details/sim_federal-register-find_1979-06-19_44_119)

3. ***7 Score and 10: La Grange County's 150th Year* (1982), chronology for 1979**

   > *"The first freight begins to move on the Pumpkin Vine Line between Shipshewana and Goshen."*

   Internet Archive · See the record (https://archive.org/details/7score10lagrange00unse)

WHAT IT CHANGES

The last decade of the Shipshewana branch is corrected: the line carried no trains from the embargo of April 1975 until the State of Indiana's lease and the Indiana

Interstate Railway's authority of June 1979, a gap of four years that the usual account passes over.

LIMITS

The 1977 notice gives the date the Penn Central stopped as "April 16, 1976" beside an embargo effective 21 April 1975; the later date is evidently a slip, as the notice itself says service had been suspended before December 1976 and the embargo is numbered for 1975. The date of the first train under the new operator is given only by the county history's year.

WHAT WE SEARCHED BEFORE CALLING IT NEW

The *Federal Register* for 1975–1980; 7 Score and 10 (1982); the Pumpkinvine trail histories; Abandoned Rails; railroad enthusiasts' forums; web searches.

Our standard for calling a finding new is set out in How we research (projectscroll.com/how-we-research/), and how we weigh each kind of record in Scrollsigns (projectscroll.com/scrollsigns/).

"New" means new to print as far as we can tell. If you know of an earlier publication, tell us and we will credit it here and raise the note's version.

WORKS CITED

Earlier work, catalogues and databases named in this note, besides the records

quoted above.

1. Railroad Fan forum, discussion of the Goshen–Shipshewana branch. https://railroadfan.com/phpbb/viewtopic.php?p=467944

THE FULL STORY

The finding is set out in context, with the rest of its sources, in The railroad that made Shipshewana (projectscroll.com/news/the-railroad-that-made-shipshewana/). In the discoveries register:

- `rr-gap-1975-1979` (projectscroll.com/discoveries/#rr-gap-1975-1979)

HOW TO CITE THIS NOTE

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