A VERY BRIEF OVERVIEW OF LOCKS AND KEYS USED BY THE LONG ISLAND RAIL ROAD

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The Long Island Rail Road ("LIRR") has a long and varied history, well recorded by numerous publications, images, and in interviews with employees, customers, and others.

Some subjects are well covered (engines, rolling stock, stations, employees to name a few); while little is known about other areas that all together comprise different facets of the LIRR operation. This article is meant to cover one lesser known area of locks and keys used by the Transportation and Signal Departments (one exception is a Tool House lock used most likely by the Maintenance of Way Department but shown here as it closely resembles a regular switch lock).

It would be well beyond the scope of this article to try and illustrate and explain every lock and key device that was used on the LIRR over the years since 1834 as many early examples are non-existent, and not every department would be fully represented, so refer to the above departments and we will begin.

In the Transportation Department (or Operating Department if you will), locks and keys were used for many purposes. One such lock was the switch lock, literally used to lock up the various switches along the right of way for all tracks on the LIRR. Whether it was main line or sidings or a T-Box (Telephone Box) used along side the track for conductors to be able to contact a tower or the Movement Bureau to obtain orders and/or messages, it was the most common of securing devices but one of the most important.

If someone threw a switch incorrectly (e. g. a facing point switch lined for an approaching train which then diverted it, causing it to go into a siding at high speed instead of straight ahead; be it an employee unfamiliar with 'reading' switch points or a vandal looking to purposely derail a train), one could see the need for having a safe and secure locking device to protect this from happening.

Some general comments are for certain locks and keys that are shown. Figures 13-16 are locks commonly used in the 1970's. They were made in England and, as noted and shown, they are very sturdy locks. A conductor told me a story of attempting to open one of these locks in the wintertime in Manual Block Territory when he had a meet with another train. It was frozen and he applied a fusee to loosen it up but could never get it open. It turns out they were made with a small plastic piece inside that melted when hit with a fusee. That ended their use.

Figures 17 and 18 represent the current Adlake (Adams and Westlake Company) switch locks. Figure 17 is the earlier version with a patent date. When that finally ran out, ADLAKE reconfigured the lock and made it tapered (square) and put Elkhart, Indiana on the back of the shackle and simply marked it LIRR. It takes the normal Horne (brass) switch key used by Transportation Department personnel today.

At one time the LIRR had locomotive hauled coaches (the 2700, 2800 and 2900 series cars); the 2700 and 2800 cars used Dream Keys to operate the doors; the 2900 series were called Electric Heats or "Armstrong" as the doors and traps opened by hand and foot for the low-level platforms. For all three series cars the storm doors at either end of the cars were locked using Coach Keys as shown in Figure 23.

Starting on the following page are examples of the various switch locks used (with the appropriate keys to open them shown next to the lock) on the LIRR.

(Right) This lock is a brass heart shaped switch lock, very heavy and made by a company from Lancaster, Pennsylvania called E. T. Fraim. It has very fancy lettering "L.I.R.R." on the back of the lock and 6 lengths of chain attached to the clevis at the bottom of the lock. Pushing aside the dust cover reveals that the brass key, also marked for Fraim and the LIRR with an employee issued number of 4372 and "S" (for Standard Cut). A straight cut or center turn as it termed would fit into the keyhole to open the lock. Circa 1874.

(Left) This lock is a brass heart shaped switch lock with no manufacturer shown; although the pebbled finish is representative of the Miller lock Company. It has no chain but is cast (raised lettering) L.I.R.R. down the back of the lock. The brass switch key is marked for F. S. Hardware Company, Lancaster, Pennsylvania with an employee number of 2198 and "P" (possibly for Passenger usage). It is also a center turn. Circa 1880's.

(Right) This lock is a brass heart shaped switch lock, heavy and has a length of chain attached to the clevis. Made by Wilson Bohannan Company in Brooklyn, New York with a patent date of June 25th, 1879 and a shop number of 115. The brass switch key is marked LIRR and Fraim with an employee number 143 and "F" (possibly for freight usage). The difference with this keyhole is that it fits what is called a 'zig zag' cut as the key bit goes slightly to the right and then back to the left.

(Left) This steel heart shaped switch lock has brass rivets and a brass dust cover or drop with a cast "LIRR" in large letters down the front and "Fraim Made in U.S.A." on the reverse, with a length of chain and a center turn brass key; marked Fraim and LIRR with an employee number of 4295. Circa 1890's.

(Right) A steel heart shaped switch lock marked "J. H. W. Climax, Newark, N. J." with an unreadable patent; a length of chain is attached to the clevis. Keyhole is of a zig zag cut for the key. Marked "L I R. R." on shackle on the back of lock with a brass switch key marked "LIRR" on front and Slaymaker (the manufacturer) on the back. Circa 1890's.

(Left) A steel heart shaped switch type lock marked "Wilson Bohannan, Brooklyn, New York" on shackle on front of lock along with the initials "T. H." which stands for tool house lock. "LIRR" is on the shackle on the back and while the keyhole shows a center turn or straight cut to the key, it has a little tip on the bit to fit this particular lock. Used for tool houses along the right of way. The key is steel, unmarked and is switch key size. Most likely this was a maintenance of way design used to lock a tool house.

(Right) This is a steel switch lock with brass rivets by Fraim dated 1919 on front of shackle with a center turn keyhole. No chain and shackle; on the back is "LIRR". The key is steel, double ring taped barrel with "LIRR" on front and "4995" on the back.

(Left) This is a steel switch lock by E. T. Fraim of Lancaster, Pennsylvania; which is marked on dust cover and has "LIRR" on the shackle. This lock has a center turn keyhole and the lock has length of chain attached to the clevis. This is an earlier version of the current day switch lock and is circa 1900.

(Right) This is a steel switch lock with brass rivets by the F. S. Hardware Company of Lancaster, Pennsylvania, so marked on both the front of the lock and on the dust cover. The keyhole is also center turn cut but the shackle is different variation in that it is rolled with "LIRR" on front. A length of chain is attached to the clevis. On back of lock is "Patented August 31, 1915".

(Left) This is a steel switch lock with brass rivets by the F. S. Hardware Company, Incorporated of Lancaster, Pennsylvania which is marked on the dust cover; "LIRR" is on the shackle with a length of chain; and the keyhole indicates a zig-zag cut to the key bit. Circa 1920's.

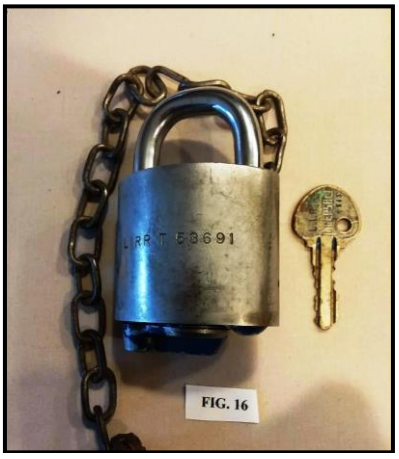
(Right) This is a steel switch lock with "LIRR" on the shackle and "Fraim" on the reverse of the shackle with "Pat. March 5, 1929" on the back of the lock. This lock comes with a length of chain and the keyhole is the zig zag cut.

(Left) This is a brass heart shaped switch type lock that may have had multipurpose use. "Wilson Bohannan" is stamped on shackle and using serif or fancy letters "LIRR" is stamped on the back of shackle. The keyhole cut is unusual '9' shape with a matching brass key marked "LIRR". Circa 1900.

(Right) This is a steel switch lock by Sargent and Greenleaf / Ingersoll marked "LIRR". The lock has a length of chain attached to it. The key is a flat steel key and is painted blue for Transportation Department. This lock was made in England with the key marked "Genuine Blank" with "LIRR" and "#873 R 876" on one side and "Ingersoll" and "#Z 1860" on the other. Circa 1970's.

(Left) This is a steel switch lock (a smaller version of lock shown just previously). This is a Sargent and Greenleaf / Ingersoll marked "LIRR" with a length of chain with a flat steel key again painted blue for Transportation Department. This lock was made in England. The key is marked "Genuine Blank" with "LIRR" and "#873 R 876" on one side and "LIRR" and "Ingersoll #813" on the reverse.

(Right) This is an Ingersoll 'Impregnable' steel switch lock marked "LIRR #51757". This lock was made in England with a length of chain and takes the (blue) steel flat key. Circa 1970's.



(Left) This is a steel switch lock (smaller version) of the one shown previously. This lock is marked "Ingersoll" and has a length of chain attached. "Made in England" and" LIRR #53691" is engraved in the body of the lock. This lock takes a flat steel Ingersoll key (blue).

(Right) This is a steel switch lock marked "ADLAKE" in raised letters on the dust cover with a length of chain. On the reverse "K-11" on appears on the shackle along with "84" (for 1984)'"LIRR" and a patent number of "2040482".

(Left) This is a steel switch lock marked "ADLAKE" in raised letters on the dust cover with a length of chain and on the reverse "ELKHART, IND." on the shackle and LIRR on the reverse body of the lock. The patent date had run out on the earlier version of this lock shown previously and this lock replaced it (note the different shape of the body of the lock).

(Right) This is a steel lock by Sargent and Greenleaf, designed as a multi-purpose one for the use of various departments. This lock takes a special key marked "S & G" on one side and a number on the reverse; this number would be specifically registered to either the Track Department, the Signal Department, the Maintenance of Way Department, etc.

(Left) This is a brass heart shaped Signal Department lock marked "Wilson Bohannan Brooklyn, N. Y.' the key is of the center turn type and it is attached to a length of chain. On the reverse in larger letters "L. I. R. R." is engraved. This lock takes a small brass key with "LIRR" and "Employee No. 2519". Circa 1920's.

(Right) This is a brass Signal Department lock with cast lettering for "LIRR" intertwined on the front of lock and "Yale" cast on the back of lock. This lock takes a flat steel key (unmarked) and was possibly used to lock a box containing a staff at one end of a bridge (double track into single track across the bridge) allowing the holder of the staff to proceed. Circa 1920's.

(Left, upper) A steel Signal Department lock with a simple screw mechanism that takes a special "triangle" cut key. These locks were made by both Raco and Safetran but the keys were unmarked. The keys come in brass or steel. This type of lock has multipurpose usage on signal boxes, switch covers, on gate boxes at railroad crossings, and similar applications. **(Left, lower)** A view of the bottom of the lock where the key is inserted.

(Right) This is an assortment of nine various keys used on the LIRR past and present. From left to right, an Engineers or Controller Key, made of brass, marked JLH (John L. Howard Company). Second is a switch key, made of brass, marked HORNE for Horne Products, Farmingdale, New York. Third is another engineer's key, made of brass and marked HORNE. The fourth item is a brass dream key. The fifth key is a steel engineer's key marked "JLH". The sixth is a dream key marked "HORNE". The seventh item is a brass coach key. The eighth item is a Dream Key marked "JLH" and the final item is a steel coach key marked "JLH".

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