

Harrisburg Chapter

HARRIS RAILROAD SWITCH TOWER MUSEUM OPENS TO THE PUBLIC FOR ITS 2016 SEASON!

- ☺ **The perfect spot to safely watch trains in any kind of weather as they pass by right outside the tower's windows! GREAT fun for kids!**
 - ☺ **Know when trains are in the area and learn how the railroad is controlled by watching our railroad dispatcher exhibit! See local train movements live, in real time on the exhibit's computer displays! Listen to the train crews and dispatchers on a live radio feed!**
 - ☺ **Have fun experiencing first-hand what it was like to be working in Harris Tower during the heyday of railroading by actually operating the tower's switching equipment!**
- **Located at [7th and Walnut Streets](#) in Harrisburg, PA, two blocks from the State Capitol Building.**
 - **Open from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. every Saturday from May 28th through October 29th.**
 - **Free admission!**
 - **Free parking adjacent to the tower!**
 - **Free Wi-Fi in the tower!**
 - **Air conditioned!**

Harris Tower is a railroad control tower built by the Pennsylvania Railroad in 1930 to control all train movements through downtown Harrisburg, PA. Listed in the National Register of Historic Places, the tower once controlled the switches and signals that routed more than 100 passenger trains a day through the Central Pennsylvania area. Harris served the PRR, the Penn Central Railroad and Amtrak until closing in 1991. It is now owned by the Harrisburg Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society and has been preserved for the public as an interactive museum.

The center piece of the exhibit is the tower's Interlocking Machine and Model Board. The Interlocking Machine is the device that actually controlled the track switches and signals. The Model Board is the lighted map of the area trackage that pinpointed the location of the trains and showed how the signals were set. We've all seen these devices in old movies where the switchmen would throw the levers to route trains onto sidings and so forth. What makes Harris Tower especially interesting is the huge amount of trackage the tower controlled. The Interlocking Machine at Harris has *113 levers* and its Model Board contains more than *450 indicator lamps*!

What makes Harris Tower truly unique is that the entire Interlocking Machine and Model Board are still working! Visitors to Harris Railroad Switch Tower can actually operate the levers of the Interlocking Machine and see what happens by way of the lighted Model Board display, exactly as it was done decades ago! The equipment has been tied into a computer simulation programmed with the actual Pennsylvania Railroad train schedules from the early 1940's. As "virtual trains" arrive in the area they are displayed by way of the indicator lights on the Model Board. It's up to visitors to throw the proper levers to route the trains to their correct destinations. Rather than simply viewing a static display, visitors to Harris Tower can actually operate the equipment and experience for themselves what it was like to work for the Pennsylvania Railroad in its heyday. To the best of our knowledge, **there is no other exhibit like Harris Railroad Switch Tower anywhere in the world!**

Harris Tower is adjacent to very active railroad lines making it a perfect vantage point for youngsters and railroad enthusiasts to **view and photograph nearly 50 Norfolk Southern and Amtrak trains each day from a safe location, regardless of the weather!**

For additional information or for group visits, contact the Harrisburg Chapter of the NRHS at 717-232-6221 or by e-mail at HarrisTower@verizon.net. You are also invited to visit our web site at www.HarrisTower.org.