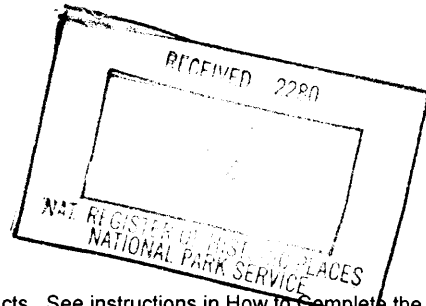


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form



This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Griffith E. J. & E. Interlocking Tower

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 201 South Broad Street N/A not for publication

city or town Griffith N/A vicinity

state Indiana code IN county Lake code 089 zip code 46319

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

[Signature]
Signature of certifying official/Title
Indiana Department of Natural Resources

8.8.03
Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

entered in the National Register.
 See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register
 See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register

removed from the National Register

other, (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper

[Signature: Casar Beall]

Date of Action
SEP 28 2003

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
 (Check as many boxes as apply)

Category of Property
 (Check only one box)

Number of Resources within Property
 (Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

- building
- district
- site
- structure
- object
- landscape

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing
 (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

**Number of contributing resources previously listed
 in the National Register**

N/A

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
 (Enter categories from instructions)

Current Functions
 (Enter categories from instructions)

TRANSPORTATION: Rail-Related

RECREATION/CULTURE: Museum

7. Description

Architectural Classification
 (Enter categories from instructions)

Materials
 (Enter categories from instructions)

19th & 20th c. AMER.: Bungalow/Craftsma

foundation CONCRETE

walls BRICK

roof ASPHALT

other

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Name of Property

County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- Criteria A, B, C, D with checkboxes and descriptions.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- Criteria A through G with checkboxes and descriptions.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

TRANSPORTATION
ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1924-1953

Significant Dates

1924

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Elgin, Joliet, & Eastern RY. Co.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographic References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- Documentation checkboxes: preliminary determination, previously listed, determined eligible, designated landmark, recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey, recorded by Historic American Engineering Record.

Primary location of additional data:

- Location checkboxes: State Historic Preservation Office, Other State agency, Federal agency, Local government, University, Other.

Name of repository:

Griffith E. J. & E. Interlocking Tower
Name of Property

Lake IN
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property Less than 1 acre

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1

16	464370	4596460
Zone	Easting	Northing

 3

Zone	Easting	Northing

2

Zone	Easting	Northing

 4

Zone	Easting	Northing

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Christopher Baas
organization _____ date 01-30-2003
street & number 21116 North Banbury telephone 317/877-7799
city or town Noblesville state IN zip code 46060

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

- A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- A Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name Griffith Historical Society, Inc.
street & number P.O. Box 678 telephone 219/924-9701
city or town Griffith state IN zip code 46204

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 7 Page 1

The Griffith E. J. & E. Interlocking Tower, Lake County, Indiana

Description

The Griffith E. J. & E. interlocking tower is a three-story brick structure with a concrete foundation and an asphalt shingle hipped roof. Measuring twenty-five feet long, sixteen feet wide, and thirty feet tall, its appearance is tall and slender. The tower is located (moved in 2000) on the abandoned Penn Central Railroad line that is now the Griffith Historical Society's railroad museum. The live E. J. & E. and Grand Trunk rail lines are located to its south, an abandoned rail line to its east, and Griffith's business district to its north. Several pieces of the museum's collection are located to its west including retired rail cars and the Griffith Grand Trunk depot. The tower's original location was approximately 100 yards to the southwest in a triangular-shaped island created by the intersecting railroad right-of-ways (original location identified on quad map).

The structure sits on a sixteen-inch high concrete foundation wall that extends three feet below grade. A water table-like band caps the wall. The brick walls are twelve inches thick and laid in a common bond.

The low-pitched roof has wide eaves that extend almost three feet past the walls. It is framed by 2x6 rafters and has modern asphalt shingles. A chimney is located at the northeast corner and extends approximately six feet above the roof. The roof's west elevation historically had a hinged scuttle.

The tower's windows are located at functional locations: the upper story to view incoming trains, and the lower stories to illuminate interior spaces. The openings have concrete sills and iron channel lintels. There are two sizes of wood double-hung, one-over-one windows (28"x60" and 28"x72"), and small, two-light metal casement windows found only on the south facade. The smaller double-hung windows are located at various locations on the west, north, and east facades. The larger windows provide expansive views of the tracks and are located in ribbons on all four facades. Metal handgrips are mounted between each top-story window to facilitate cleaning.

The north façade has a modern ground-story entry door located on its northwest corner, and a window located in the center of the wall. The top story has a ribbon of three windows centered on the wall.

The east façade has a single ground-story window, and a single second-story window. Two ribbons of three windows are centered on the wall's top story. An electrical chase exits the wall just south of the ground-story window.

The south façade's ground-story has two casement windows symmetrically spaced above the concrete foundation wall, and a ribbon of three windows centered on the top story.

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Section number 7 Page 2

The Griffith E. J. & E. Interlocking Tower, Lake County, Indiana

The west façade has a single, centrally located bottom-story window, and a single second-story window located near its southwest corner. The top-story has a ribbon of five windows, and a door located on the southwest corner. A wall mounted light is located between the door and windows. A metal stairs runs from the base of the building's northwest corner up diagonally across the façade to a landing at the top-story door. The stairs have channel stringers, and metal grate steps and landing. The stairs is attached to the masonry wall and is supported by metal braces.

The ground floor is concrete on grade. The second and third floors are four-inch thick concrete slabs supported by I-beams that span between the east and west walls. The lower story interior walls are 4" clay block. Utility lights hang from the ceiling. The upper-story walls and ceiling are painted plaster, and the windows have plain wood sills and jambs. Heat radiators are located on the north, west, and east walls.

The ground-story is entered from the north façade, and is divided into three rooms by two interior masonry walls. The northern-most room is two stories in height and historically had a furnace that vented through the flue located in its northeast corner. The center room is two stories in height and has wide metal chases that housed the electrical wires that controlled the switches. Historically it had wooden stairs that accessed the second-story space in the southern-most third of the structure. The stairs led to an existing wood door with five horizontal panels of equal size. The second-story space is a single-story in height and had shelving to store back-up batteries. A sink is located on the west wall. The ground-story space below the battery room is a single story in height, and an extension of the center two-story space.

The third floor is an open room accessed from the exterior metal stairs on the east façade. The space is consumed by a large, rectangular cabinet-like structure that houses the interlock switches. The structure is constructed of wood and has a series of paneled access doors. The metal pistol grip switches are located on the west side. A small restroom is framed into the southeast corner. Storage lockers are located along the east wall, and the switchman's desk is located between the entry door and the restroom. The ceiling has a square scuttle.

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Section number 8 Page 3

The Griffith E. J. & E. Interlocking Tower, Lake County, Indiana

Statement of Significance

Griffith's Elgin, Joliet, & Eastern Interlocking Tower is a three-story brick and concrete structure eligible for the National Register under Criteria A for its local significance in the development of the Griffith as a railroad town, and as an outstanding example of railroad related architecture. It meets Criterion Exception B because it remains at the same rail junction, is oriented as if serving the existing live track, and the integrity of the structure has not been compromised.

Griffith's nickname is "The Town That Came to the Tracks." At the height of its rail days in the 1950's, five railroads operated eleven tracks on the south side of the town's business district. The intersecting tracks created fourteen diamonds (the shape caused by the crossing of two tracks). On an average day the citizens of Griffith witnessed 180 trains or 7.5 trains per hour.¹

Its association with railroads is even evident in the town's name, assumed from a "Mr. Griffith," the Grand Trunk surveyor who set the grade for rail. The "casual reference" to the "Griffith Section" of track became synonymous with the location of the town.²

Griffith History

The swampland of what was to become Griffith was first settled in the mid 1850's following Indiana's 1853 offer to homestead wetlands at \$1.25 an acre.³ The town's association with railroads came soon after when, in 1854, the Michigan Southern built a line east from Joliet through what would become Griffith, and north to Michigan.⁴ Several others followed: The Grand Trunk (1880), the Erie (1881), and the Elgin, Joliet, & Eastern (1888). The railroads opened new markets in the area for farming and building supplies, and consumer goods. It opened the Chicago market to farmers for the sale of milk and produce.⁵

The Town of Griffith was founded in 1891 when Jay and Elmer Dwiggin purchased the 140 acres of farmland around the junction of the four railroads. The brothers platted a town and made grand offers to companies to open and operate factories and businesses. Griffith was billed as "Chicago's

¹ Post Tribune article from museum's collection, date unknown.

² Diamond Jubilee Committee, *75 Years of Growing Together: The History of the People of Griffith, Indiana* (Self published, 1979) 10.

³ Kulinski, Karen Ed. *The Town That Came to the Tracks: A Children's History of Griffith, Volume III* (Griffith Historical Society, 2001) 4.

⁴ Diamond Jubilee Committee. *75 Years of Growing Together: The History of the People of Griffith, Indiana* (Self published) 8.

⁵ Kulinski, Karen Ed. *The Town That Came to the Tracks: A Children's History of Griffith, Volume I.* (Griffith Historical Society, 1999) 4.

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The Griffith E. J. & E. Interlocking Tower, Lake County, Indiana

Best Factory Suburb” and had sales offices in both Griffith and Chicago, and even a booth at the Columbian Exposition.⁶

The idea of a planned, or prospected, factory town appears to be a common theme in the Chicago region. Pullman was developed in 1880, and in Lake County, the United States Steel Company developed Gary starting in 1906, and East Chicago’s Marktown was constructed beginning in 1917. The Dwiggins’ venture failed when they borrowed against the land during the Panic and Depression of 1893. By 1898 the brothers had fled to their next opportunity, and the town was left on its own. The remaining locals relied on the presence of the railroads for their livelihood, many as lifelong employees. A second source of employment and economic stability was the Standard Oil Company’s pipeline staging area west of the town, a final preparation area before the crude’s ultimate destination to the Whiting refinery.⁷

The E. J. & E.

The Elgin, Joliet, and Eastern (also known as the E. J. & E., or “The J”) is a 130-mile railway that stretches in an arc around Chicago and Lake Michigan from Waukegan, Illinois to Porter, Indiana. It serves as a switching line as well as a Chicago bypass.⁸ With Chicago being a rail hub, it is easier to switch and organize trains in areas beyond the city.

The J began its existence as a venture to construct a rail line from Valparaiso west to Elgin, Illinois. This was accomplished by the formation of two companies, the E. J. & E. of Illinois and the E. J. & E. of Indiana, both incorporated in 1887. The Illinois venture constructed its line west from the Indiana-Illinois state line to Elgin, completing the project in 1888. The Indiana venture built east through Griffith and Hobart, and reached McCool, IN in late 1888 (and ultimately to Porter in 1893). The Elgin, Joliet, and Eastern Railway Company officially began operations in January 1, 1889 when the two ventures merged.

The railroad grew by acquiring several small regional upstart companies, and was itself purchased in 1898 by the Federal Steel Company who constructed a line from Griffith north to Clark Junction. United States Steel acquired Federal Steel in 1901 (including The J), and extended the line from Clark Junction to the Gary millworks, linking Griffith to Lake Michigan and the industry that shaped the region.⁹

⁶ Diamond Jubilee Committee. *75 Years of Growing Together: The History of the People of Griffith, Indiana* (Self published) 12.

⁷ Diamond Jubilee Committee. *75 Years of Growing Together: The History of the People of Griffith, Indiana* (Self published) 19.

⁸ Richard S. Simons and Francis Parker, *Railroads of Indiana* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997) 195.

⁹ From the web site <http://www.tstarinc.com/eje/history2.html>, the site of the Tristar Company, present owner of The J. Also, Stephan Dale on the web site <http://eje.railfan.net/>.

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The Griffith E. J. & E. Interlocking Tower, Lake County, Indiana

Interlocking Towers

An interlocking device was defined "as a combination of signals, derails, locks and switches, controlled from a central tower and so arranged and connected as to make it physically impossible for the operation to promote a collision of trains on opposing routes. A form of the device was developed as early as 1857 to eliminate time consuming stops at junctions. A disobedience of signals by an engineman will lead to the derailment of his engine or a portion of his train, but collisions of engines or trains on opposing lines are absolutely avoided."¹⁰ The interlocking procedure had to be performed in the proper sequence to work successfully. Signals must be at stop and derails open on the conflicting route before the signal to switch can be moved, and it was impossible to make a switch while a train occupied the junction.¹¹

The introduction of interlocking towers to most states was mandated by law. In Indiana the 1903 General Assembly established the right of one railroad company to cross another at grade. The law spelled out the criteria for such crossings, who paid for construction, how disputes were settled, and that the company desiring the cross install and maintain, at its own expense, "a system of interlocking works with a derailing apparatus in the track of each company of such a design and character as will be best calculated to prevent collision."¹²

The law encouraged commerce by preventing one carrier from effectively shutting out another by denying grade access to its right-of-way (or otherwise forcing the construction of expensive bridges), and reduced the time necessary for a train to wait before crossing an intersection. The safety aspect of the installation of interlocking devices removed, or limited, the possibility of human error. As "trains become more frequent and were operated on faster schedules, it became evident that the human factor must be relieved of its responsibilities whenever possible and superseded by well-designed apparatus, the operation of which is mechanically uniform and certain, and any failure of which will invariably be on the side of safety."¹³

¹⁰ From <http://www.railspot.com/interlockers/history.htm#definition>, a web site featuring interlocking towers, and describes the historic interlocking laws for Texas.

¹¹ Armstrong, John H., *The Railroad: What It Is, What It Does, Fourth Edition* (Simmons-Boardman Books, Inc., 1998) 136.

¹² Storms, Daniel E., *Laws of the State of Indiana: Passed by the Sixty-Third Regular Session of the General Assembly* (Indianapolis: Wm. B. Buford, 1905) 458.

¹³ See note #10.

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The Griffith E. J. & E. Interlocking Tower, Lake County, Indiana

In 1907 the General Assembly created and empowered a commission to regulate railroad (previously administered by the State Auditor). Specifically, "to supervise the crossing of tracks by other railroads." The act also stated that the commission had the authority to "order the installation and maintenance of interlocking devices and appliances at railroad crossings in this state" and that where one of the commission's engineers identified an unsafe junction "whose lines cross at grade" could order a company to install an "improved interlocking and derailing device."¹⁴ In the case of the Griffith tower, the switchman pulled or pushed "pistol grip" style switches that sent electrical power to the tracks to safely guide the train through the junction. Earlier switches had floor mounted levers.

While there are variations, the typical interlocking tower was three stories in height, with the lower stories generally nondescript excepting an occasional door or window. The top story was accessed by an exterior stair and dominated by large windows. Their layout was strictly utilitarian. The lower stories housed the switch operations, backup batteries, and the tower's utilities. The large windows allowed the switchman to view incoming trains. The extended eaves provided the windows additional cover from rain and the sun's glare.

This typical tower form could be designed in a variety of materials and styles. The earliest towers were constructed of wood frame with clapboard siding. The Griffith tower was constructed somewhat later than the earlier first-generation frame towers. Its brick and concrete construction and utilitarian design, shows a move to fire resistant materials, The J appears to have embraced the modern building methods of reinforced concrete and block walls with a brick veneer, and the perceived impression of permanence presented by a masonry structure. The Griffith tower appears somewhat Prairie, or Arts-and-Crafts-like in style with its brick walls, hipped roof with wide eaves, and ribbons of large windows. However, its form (hipped roof, wide eaves, large windows) appears to be an extension of precedent railroad structures, especially the simple forms of early Twentieth Century small-town depots.

In 1924 when the Griffith tower was constructed, the presence of interlocking towers was common. Its construction was funded by the now five railroads that intersected at Griffith (E. J. & E., Grand Trunk, C. & O., Chicago and Erie, and the Penn Central) and it was designed, constructed, operated by the Elgin, Joliet & Eastern.

¹⁴ Sims, Fred. *Laws of the State of Indiana: Passed by the Sixty-Fifth Regular Session of the General Assembly* (Indianapolis: Wm. B. Buford, 1907) 458.

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The Griffith E. J. & E. Interlocking Tower, Lake County, Indiana

At one time, more than 5,000 towers stood guard at railroad crossings in the United States. Today, only 177 are still standing in North America. In Northwest Indiana, only six towers remain in operation and application has been made to the Interstate Commerce Commission to close two. In the remainder of the state, only one tower remains (Union Station-Indianapolis) and its future is uncertain. Very few towers have been saved and only a few are open to the public.

As with most historic railroad structures, once they are obsolete they are a financial, maintenance, and safety burden. Many structures are demolished, or sold on the condition that, for safety reasons, they be removed from the railroad right-of-way. The Griffith interlocking tower operated until 1999 and was purchased by the Griffith Historical Society, Inc. with the provision that it be moved from railroad property. It was moved approximately 100 yards northeast out of The J right-of-way and onto the society's railroad museum located on the adjacent and abandoned Penn Central right-of-way. While the move compromises the tower's contextual integrity, it remains at the same railroad junction, is oriented as if serving the existing live track, and integrity of the structure has not been compromised.

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The Griffith E. J. & E. Interlocking Tower, Lake County, Indiana

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The Griffith E. J. & E. Interlocking Tower, Lake County, Indiana

Verbal Boundary Description

In plan, a rectangle offset ten feet from each wall of the tower.

Boundary Justification

The rectangular boundary includes only the tower, and excludes the adjacent non-contributing collection of museum pieces.

Photographs

Photos taken by Christopher Baas- August 25, 2002

1. View of tower looking northwest at additional museum collection including the Griffith Grand Trunk depot and train cars.
2. View of north and east facades looking northwest.
3. View of south and east facades looking northwest.
4. View of west facade.
5. View of top-story interior south wall: switchman's desk.
6. View of top-story interior south wall: restroom.
7. View of north and west walls.
8. View of pistol grip switch levers.
9. View of ground and second-story interior looking north.
10. View of electrical chases in central interior room looking southwest.