

From the very beginning of railroads, 180 years ago, the railroads realized that it would be necessary to protect the switch stands that controlled the operation of the switches that moved trains from one track to another. Locks were required to prevent unauthorized movement of the switches which could (and did) cause derailments and wrecks, often with fatal consequences. Railroad rules, then and now, demand that a switch be locked each time that it is thrown and no train movement is allowed through an unlocked switch.

Locks were also required on almost every other railroad building, cars carrying the US mail, Railway Express etc. Virtually everything on the railroad.

They soon realized that a single lock and key combination would not work for all applications, as only certain people needed to be able to use certain items.

In addition, the railroads needed to differentiate between those keys and locks, Internally, and between their keys and locks and those of other railroads, especially those with whom they interchanged freight and passenger cars.