

BULLETIN

A TALE OF THREE
(PRE-CIVIL WAR) TUNNELS
By D. Rogoff - - Page 3

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NEW YORK CENTRAL ADDS NEW M-U CARS

The first of 53 new commuter coaches went into service about the beginning of April. The first 27 were purchased by New York State funds and leased through the Port of New York Authority. Numbers start at 4700 and they are built by St. Louis Car division of General Steel Industries. They M-U with the 4500's built in 1949-50 by St. Louis and have 3 and 2 seating. (Let's hope the railroads never adopt the 3 and 3 seating of some airplanes.) The new cars have sealed windows (tinted) somewhat smaller than the 4500's and double headlights, air conditioning by Standard Car Equipment Co., electric heaters and MCB (standard AAR) couplers. Cost: \$155,000 each. (An article about New York Central commuter cars and services and a history of the electrification appeared in ERA HEADLIGHTS, May 1960 when the 4500's were brand new.)

STATEN ISLAND RT SHOP & CARS DESTROYED BY FIRE

On April 5th, fire destroyed the Clifton Shops of Staten Island Rapid Transit together with seven passenger cars. Damage was estimated at half-a-million dollars. The cars cost \$33,000 when new in the mid-twenties but now NYCTA pays \$108,500 for smaller IRT cars.

PUBLICITY FOR NEW RED IRT CARS--R-29's (8570-8805)

When the first ten R-29 subway cars were delivered March 28th, NYCTA had fire boats spray water and asked other ships to whistle salutes to the bright red cars as they sailed on a barge down the North (Hudson) River around the Battery and up the East River to Hunts Point. The first ten cars made a publicity run (without passengers) from Times Square to Willets Point (World's Fair) on April 30th. That afternoon, eight cars, made two round trips between Flushing and Times Sq. with passengers. The last outbound trip was express. Then they were returned to the Bronx where they were put into service on the IRT Broadway Local the following day. The transfer trip from Corona yards went to Court House Sq. on the IRT Flushing line, reversed to Queensboro Plaza, then switched to the BMT Astoria line to 39-Beebe Ave., reversed, via BMT Broadway subway, Montague St. Tunnel, 4th Ave. (Exp.), Sea Beach line through Coney Isl. yard, Culver ramp, IND "D" line to Concourse yard, ramp to IRT Jerome Ave. and down Lexington Ave. exp. to South Ferry then north on 7th Ave.--Broadway line local to Van Cortlandt Park yards.

The design of the cars are identical to previous IRT cars (but they have a drawbar) but colors have been revised. The outside is bright red (similar to Toronto) with the TA seal behind the motorman's side window. The inside is light blue walls, blue doors (different color from the previous), white ceiling and dark gray hard plastic seats. Lettering is yellow. The plastic tile floor is light tan by the seats and mottled gray down the center with a stripe to each door.

The R-29 cars are all being assigned to the Broadway local and the cars they replace will be reassigned as follows: 72 to the 7th Ave. Exp. for elimination of all old cars on those lines; 44 to the Lex-Pelham line for 9-car trains and 120 to the Lex-Jerome so that owl and Sunday service will be furnished by R-Type or SMEE trains. Jerome Ave. is slated to get them last since some platform extensions are not yet completed although most extensions have been completed.

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LONG ISLAND RR SCRAPPING CARS, OTHER NEWS & NOTES

Steam Coaches: 141, 158, 164, 166, 171, 173, 174, 340, 344, 350 and 354; also M-U's: 1003, 1407, 1486, 1517, 1533, 1558 & 4208; also (Snow) Flangers: W-85, W-87, W-88 and W-90 are being scrapped at Holban yard.

Long Island inaugurated bus service between Huntington and Greenport on February 19th, 1962.

Brooklyn College may acquire "air rights" over LIRR's Bay Ridge freight branch for additional college facilities.

LIRR has again asked passengers to pick colors for local stations.

The Long Island RR has set up its own legion--the Legion of Influential Rail Riders in a different public relations effort.

Long Island RR, on Jan 15th, set up bars on 6 M-U trains. The Reading dropped a similar plan before starting it because of opposition from - - - the wives of the commuters.

OTHER NEWS TID-BITS WORTH NOTING

A presidential commission recommended (late Feb.) many railroad work rule changes, elimination of many jobs and changes in pay.

Nine officials of Western railroads, appointed by President Kennedy to study the troubles of the New Haven RR, reported that the main losses were from long distance passengers and freight and not from commuters as it had always been assumed. New Haven reduced Parlor Car fares in Jan. on certain trains to compete with air fares.

A congregational Church in Chappaqua started to hold ethics seminars on a New York Central commuter train on Feb. 26th.

New York Central has tried a "push-pull" operation between Grand Central and Harmon. The electric engine is at the north end both ways.

A strike by Public Service Coordinated Transit employees put the Newark subway out of operation February 19th thru 21st. One PCC car, incidently has a trolley shoe and others may soon receive them.

A strike took Fifth Ave. and Surface Transit (Third Ave.) buses off New York streets starting March 1st until the City seized the buses and a NYCTA subsidiary, the Manhattan & Bronx Surface Transit Operating Authority resumed operation, with some TA buses supplementing seized ones.

NEW YORK CITY TRANSIT AUTHORITY SERVICE NOTES

Sat. Brighton Exp. service was discontinued April 21st, now the QB Fway-Brighton Local via Bridge operates all-day Sat. & Sun. The Franklin through service local to Brighton Beach continues Saturday operation.

Since May 2nd, West End Expresses no longer stop at 49th St-7th Av.

Aqueduct Special service was resumed with reopening of the race track and these trains relay at Lexington Ave.-53rd St. (on Sat.).

NYCTA NOTES, NEW CARS

The last of the r*30's arrived late February and all were in service about one month later. They are used on several West End Locals, a few (rush-hours) West End Exps. as well as on the 4th Ave.-Nassau Loop specials. Side signs carry S-Special route signs in the pm and M-Nassau St. Exp. in the am rush. Most Sat. West End trains use the SMEE cars and on Sundays all lines (except Culver and Franklin shuttles) of the BMT Southern Div. BMT use the new cars.

Headlights have been installed on nearly R-15's and R-16's, three R-10's and 2 r*12's; 5772 has headlights at both ends, 5760 at one end only. The others will get them before very long.

BMT Q-Types (1600's) are being repainted and headlights are being installed below the conductor steps. The red tail lights are moved slightly inward to accomplish this. Q-Type 1607 has just been repainted with a silver roof. Larger numbers are being used.

R-31 contract for Vacuum Cleaner train has been awarded to Consolidated Diesel Corp. of Stamford Conn. Delivery is due in December 1962.

--More NYCTA News on Page 6 - Other News Bottom Page 5--

A Tale of Three Tunnels

Part I - The Mt. Prospect Tunnel by D. ROGOFF, ERA Sprague Librarian

New York City, unknown to many, has 3 tunnels, each built before the Civil War, which are still in existence. Two are still in use, the third is sealed and forgotten. Most of us have probably gone through the first two on many occasions.

The oldest, and the first tunnel in New York City, is the "Mt. Prospect Tunnel" under Park Ave. between 92nd and 94th Streets. The tunnel is named after the hill through it passes and a once famous 2-floor hotel of the day, Prospect Hall. The tunnel was built for the New York and Harlaem Rail-Road Co.'s main line in 1837. The contractor was John Rutter. The main line was via Park Ave. (then 4th Ave.) and other streets to Park Row in lower Manhattan. Most of the route below 94th St. was in open cut, but Mt. Prospect was too steep and a tunnel was necessary.

The tunnel was a 2-track, arched roof, brick and masonry lined structure built by rock tunneling. It was 24 feet wide, 21 feet high and 844 feet long. At first it was operated with horse drawn cars exclusively. In 1839, steam locomotives were introduced and both horse and locomotive drawn cars shared the tunnel. Later the horses were withdrawn entirely.

In 1872-4, the open cut areas of the main line north of 48th St. were covered over and the route enlarged to four tracks. Paralleling single track tunnels were dug at the same time, at each side of the Mt. Prospect Tunnel. Years later, all 4 tracks were electrified and the Mt. Prospect Tunnel was slightly enlarged. The tunnel, however, remains in use to this day as the 2 center tracks of the New York Central Railroad Co. (successor to the New York and Harlaem Rail-road Co.) under Park Ave. between 92nd and 94th Sts., and is one of the world's busiest electric railroad tunnels.

Part II - The "Cobble Hill" Tunnel

The second tunnel was known as the "Cobble Hill Tunnel" and was built through the hill of the same name at the south end of Brooklyn Heights. Its route was under Atlantic Ave. (then St.) between Boerum and Court Sts. at the east end and Columbia and Hicks Sts. at the west end. The tunnel was, and is, a 2 track arched roof brick and rubble masonry lined structure built by an unknown contractor.

The corner stone was laid on May 24, 1844 and the tunnel (then only an open cut) was opened on Dec. 3, 1844 and was finished by Jan. 1, 1845. Five years later a "sturdy brick arch" was placed over the cut. As built, the tunnel was 21 feet wide, 17 feet high and 1,611 feet long. There were no stations in the tunnel.

The tunnel was built for the Brooklyn and Jamaica Railroad Co., then a lessee of the Long Island Railroad Co. The L.I.R.R. had leased the line to provide a track connection to the East River, as their own tracks then ended at Jamaica. A small railroad station adjoined the "South Ferry" station at the foot of Atlantic Ave. The B. & J. operated small underpowered locomotives which could not negotiate the grades of Cobble Hill without the help of horses. The cut (later tunnel) was built to avoid the use of the noble beasts, and incidently, to improve the appearance of the then aristocratic neighborhood.

The local residents opposed steam operation from the first and gave the L.I.R.R. a very bad time and by 1858 had succeeded in getting a court order to halt steam operation in Brooklyn. The L.I. then decided to abandon their lease of the B. & J. and to build their own trackage to a different point on the East River. The result was the current L.I. Main Line, was built in 1861 from Jamaica to Hunter's

Point. The last steam through the tunnel was in 1860, and the last horse powered run was on Sept. 30, 1861. The ends of the tunnel were sealed in the fall of 1861.

The B. & J. eventually became a part of the BRT (Brooklyn Rapid Transit system). In 1875, the L.I. resumed operation on Atlantic Ave., but going only as far as Flatbush Ave., under terms of a new agreement with a B. & J. successor. The L.I., however, never used the tunnel after 1861.

Ventilation, and probably light, was supplied by 3 roof vents at the center of the roof arch which reached the street surface as chimneys on small islands. When the tunnel was sealed, the 3 roof vents were cut off 3 feet below the street surface and capped as manholes. These manholes are believed to be the only present access.

The tunnel has been inspected many times since abandonment. It was reportedly used by smugglers after the Civil War. On Jan. 27, 1916, the tunnel was explored and photographed by the Dept. of Substructures of the Borough President of Brooklyn's office. It was found to be in relatively good condition, but empty and without rail or ties. In the 20's the tunnel was reportedly used for both mushroom growing and bootleg whiskey stills. In 1936, New York City police broke into the tunnel with jackhammers to look for the body of a hoodlum supposedly buried there. The hoodlum was found later in a barrel of cement in Buffalo. In 1941 the tunnel was again inspected (this time by the W.P.A.) to determine its structural strength. A few years later, it was once again opened (by the F.B.I.) in an unsuccessful search for spies. Finally (as far as this author knows), it was inspected only a few years ago by E.R.A. members George Horn and Martin Schachne.

The history of this tunnel and the Brooklyn and Jamaica Railroad will be covered in much more detail and probably much more accurately by E.R.A. Honorary Member Vincent Seyfried in a forthcoming volume of his current series on the history of the Long Island R.R. This book should prove to be a valuable addition to the history of railroads (& tunnels).

Part III - The Murray Hill Tunnel

The third tunnel is the Murray Hill Tunnel under Park Ave. between 34th and 39th Streets, New York. It is a 2-track arched roof, brick and masonry structure built between 1850 and 1852 by roofing over an earlier open cut. It was built by an unknown contractor. It is 24 feet wide and 15 feet high.

As with the Mt. Prospect Tunnel (see Part I), this tunnel was built for the New York and Harlaem Rail-Road Co.'s main line from lower Manhattan, which had begun operation in 1837. An open cut was made through Murray Hill on Park Ave. (then 4th Ave.) because of the steep grades and a cliff between 33rd and 34th Sts. The line was operated by both horse and steam power. The local residents objected to a railroad in a cut in the middle of their street and by 1850 had succeeded in getting the railroad to cover the open cut. The open cut had extended from 32nd to 42nd Sts., but in converting the cut to a tunnel, only the section between 34th and 39th Sts. was covered. The remainder of the cut was retained for approaches.

In the late 1890's, railroad's service was discontinued below 42nd St. and the tunnel was leased to the Metropolitan Street Railway for conduit surface car operation. The lease, dated June 11, 1896, was for 999 years. The Metropolitan built 2 small outside platform stations in the tunnel at 36th & 40th Sts. Parts of the 36th St. station and stairways to the street are still in place. The Metropolitan and its successors operated conduit cars through the tunnel until the service was

replaced by buses in the early thirties.

In 1919, the "Park Ave. Viaduct," a steel vehicular elevated structure was built on Park Ave. between 40th St. and the then relatively new Grand Central Terminal. The viaduct was built for the Borough President of Manhattan by the Terry & Tench Co. It was directly above the open cut at the north end of the tunnel. Surface car operation was unaffected by the vehicular viaduct and continued to operate under Park Ave. to just north of 41st St. and to ramp to street surface just south of 42nd St. (under the viaduct). When surface car operation ceased, it was decided to use the tunnel for automobiles, and to connect it to the south end of the Park Ave. Viaduct. It was necessary to rebuild the open cut at the north end of the tunnel, to bring tunnel traffic to the street surface at 40th St., and a sudden steep grade was built just south of 40th St. It is still in place. Parts of the cut which were abandoned, were, however, retained intact under the viaduct. They were used for a time for (Carey) airport bus storage, and are currently used for Dept. of Sanitation storage. The New York City Visitors' Bureau office is also built on part of the old cut.

The south end of the tunnel was also rebuilt in 1919 as part of the "4th Ave. Improvement." This improvement consisted of rebuilding of the open cut at the south end so as to bring tunnel traffic to the street surface at 33rd instead of 32nd St. As a result, here, as at the north end, there is a sudden steep grade. The "4th Ave. Improvement" was built for the Borough President of Manhattan by Cox Contracting Co. D. Rogoff 4/18/62

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PRESIDENT PROPOSES TRANSIT AID: N.Y. AREA PROPOSALS: PNYA UNIT

In April, President Kennedy asked Congress for \$500,000,000 to aid urban areas in solving transit problems. Plans to help reduce rail, air and bus fares and attempt to counteract the growing trend to private automobile travel were indicated. Newspaper reports mentioned street cars as being included in the comprehensive plans.

On May 1st, the Tri-State Transportation Committee suggested five projects for the New York area in connection with Kennedy's program:

1-Additional trains and eight less stops on the New York Central's Harlem Div. between Brewster and White Plains. These trains would run non-stop between White Plains and Grand Central. Additional parking facilities and feeder buses would be provided north of White Plains.

2-Operation of two New Haven commuter trains from Stamford over the Hell Gate Bridge to Astoria where passengers could transfer to the BMT Astoria line trains at Ditmars Blvd.

3-Additional non-rush express trains (about 30) on the Port Washington Division of the Long Island Rail Road.

4-A project for collecting fares at the LIRR stations at Forest Hills and Kew Gardens instead of on the trains. The plan envisions a turnstile that would accept tokens or charge plates.

5-An additional station for Pennsylvania commuter trains about two miles southwest of New Brunswick with a 300-car parking lot.

The same committee is also studying the feasibility of making a coordinated transit type service of NYCentral and New Haven lines.

The Port of New York Authority on April 1st set up a new Rail Transportation Department headed by Neal R. Montanus and assistants Louis J. Gambaccini and Jack D. Storm. They will supervise the leasing of new cars to commuter railroads and head the new Port Authority Trans-Hudson Corp. which will operate the Hudson Tubes. This will permit other PNYA operations to remain free of ICC which regulates the H&M.

