

The Bulletin



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90 YEARS OF SUBWAY SERVICE TO ASTORIA

The first Astoria train was a special train that departed from Grand Central at 2 PM February 1, 1917. On board were city officials, borough officials, members of the Public Service Commission, and Interborough Rapid Transit Company officials. There were special celebrations near the new line. Houses and commercial buildings were draped with flags and whistles were blown. When the train arrived at Ditmars Boulevard, the passengers alighted, and the train and guests were photographed. Members of the Steinway Civic Association took the guests in automobiles and sightseeing cars through portions of the Steinway and Astoria sections, after which they returned to Ditmars Boulevard. The guests boarded the train again and returned to Queensboro Plaza for formal exercises at the Queens Chamber of Commerce. There was a Long Island City night of entertainment at the Bohemian Hall, located at the Ditmars Boulevard station.

Queens residents were anxious to have rapid transit when they heard about the Brooklyn Bridge cable railway. William Steinway, whose business interests centered in Astoria, was deeply interested in rapid transit in New York City. He was Chairman of the Rapid Transit Commission for a few years. Because of his foresight, New York possesses a modern rapid transit system.

The Astoria Line is a part of the route adopted by the Public Service Commission on October 10, 1911. Route 37 includes the Astoria Line and the portion of the Corona Line as far east as Woodside. The Board of Estimate and Apportionment approved the route on October 26, 1911 and Mayor Gaynor gave his approval on April 8, 1912.

The Commission adopted a resolution directing the preparation of plans and form of contract for the Astoria Line and the Corona Line on June 14, 1912. The form of contract was adopted on December 17, 1912 and a public hearing was scheduled for January 4, 1913. The Municipal Art Commission approved the type of structure on December 27, 1912. Bids were received on January 28, 1913 and the contract was awarded to the Cooper and Evans Company for \$860,743.50. The contract for station finish was let to Charles Mead and Company at a cost of \$268,102.50. A contract for the installation of tracks, which also covered Queensboro Plaza and the Corona Line, was awarded at a cost of \$204,898.10. Approximately \$55,000 was chargeable to track installation on the Astoria Line and its structural connections to Queensboro Plaza. The total cost of the line without equipment, which was furnished by the operating companies, was about \$1.35 million.

The Queensboro Plaza station, which cost approximately \$500,000, was described as the largest elevated station in the world. It was 480 feet long and 90 feet wide, with a mezzanine and four tracks on each of the two levels.

The Astoria and Corona Lines were the only rapid transit lines with joint operation of IRT and BRT/BMT trains. The Transit Commission's reports explained how the fares were apportioned. The trackage agreement between the Interborough Rapid Transit Company and the New York Municipal Railway Company (BRT) dated March 10, 1913 stated, "The Interborough Company shall accord to the Railway Corporation

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Next Trip: Grand Central Terminal Tour, February 17