

The Bulletin



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For general inquiries, contact us at nydiv@erausa.org or by phone at (212) 986-4482 (voice mail available). The Division's website is www.erausa.org/nydiv.html.

Editorial Staff:
Editor-in-Chief:
Bernard Linder
News Editor:
Randy Glucksman
Contributing Editor:
Jeffrey Erlitz

Production Manager:
David Ross

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CITY BEGAN OPERATING STATEN ISLAND TROLLEY CARS IN 1920

Street railways were hard hit by World War I and the tremendous increase in costs following it. In this three-part series, we are explaining how New York City's street railways were able to maintain service during this difficult period. The December, 2009 issue discussed the Brooklyn and Queens companies' problems, the next issue analyzed the Manhattan and Bronx companies' difficulties, and this issue will reveal the problems encountered on Staten Island.

In 1919, two companies operated trolley cars on Staten Island. Richmond Light & Railroad Company provided service, but Staten Island Midland Railway ceased operating on January 19, 1920 because of inadequate receipts, depriving thousands of Staten Island passengers of needed transportation. The Public Service Commission and the city had advance notice of the company's problems, and the former made every effort to help the company. But the Board of Estimate and Apportionment refused the company's plea for relief. Without the Board's consent, PSC could not save the company. In the summer of 1919, the company informed PSC that it would cease operating if relief were not granted. PSC was able to persuade the company to continue operating a little longer. In December, 1919, the company finally set the date for closing down. At a hearing held on December 29, 1919, the company revealed that it was operated at a loss in 1919 and several previous years. Service was discontinued January 19, 1920 despite a Supreme Court restraining order served on the company's Traffic Superintendent.

The following lines ceased operating: Silver

Lake, Concord, Richmond, St. George and Port Richmond to Midland Beach, and Manor Road.

From January 19 to December 1, 1920, Richmond Light & Railroad operated cars on the Silver Lake Line between St. George and Clove Road. The city operated an inefficient bus service, which could not handle the traffic. Starting May 21, 1920, Midland operated one car on each line, except three cars on St. George to Port Richmond via Concord between 10 AM and 5:25 PM.

On November 17, 1920, 28 cars, probably single-truck Birneys, were delivered to Staten Island. Municipal operation by the Department of Plant and Structures began on December 1, 1920 over the former Midland routes. With ten additional Birneys and several second-hand Second Avenue Railroad cars, the fleet was increased to 69 cars in 1921.

Six years later, trolley service ended suddenly because the Controller refused to pay the electric bill. In April, 1927, Staten Island Edison asked the city to pay a year and a half overdue electric bill. A month later, the matter was brought up and received no attention. When the city received the notice to discontinue power, it asked for an extension of time. On July 1, one month's notice was given to the city. On July 30, 1927, there was an all-day conference regarding the unpaid \$175,000 electric bill. The Controller said that the operation was illegal, and he agreed to pay the final bill after trolley service was discontinued. The Commissioner of Plant and Structures said that he could serve Staten

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NEXT TRIP: 207TH STREET SHOP TOUR—MARCH 20