

VOLUME 4

NUMBER 7

BULLETIN

JULY 1961

4 PAGES

Publications Comm., New York Div., ERA, 145 Greenwich Street, New York

1912 PARADE OF STREET CARS...Pp.2-3 | NEW HAVEN RR IS BANKRUPT...Page 4

PENNSYLVANIA RAILROAD OFFERS REDUCED WEEKEND FARES

In June, the Pennsy started selling reduced roundtrip tickets between New York and Washington and other points on this NY-Wash. line. The tickets, sold at 2/3rds the regular rt fare, are good on trains leaving Saturdays or Sunday mornings and leaving on the return trip before 3 pm Sundays. Normally, there is no saving on roundtrip tickets on the Pennsylvania's busy New York-Washington line.

ERIE-LACKAWANNA RR EYES "RAPID TRANSIT"

The Erie-Lackawanna has hired Gibbs & Hills to survey possible improvements in passenger services including electrification of some lines and track connections and through service with the Hudson Tubes. The latter plan, advocated for years by Hudson Tubes Trustee Stichman, would permit many to ride to their jobs without change of trains. Many others who now must change twice, would have but one change of trains. The disadvantage is that the size of the passenger cars would be limited by the small dimensions of the Hudson & Manhattan tunnels.

NYCTA BUDGETS FUNDS FOR IMPROVEMENTS AS WELL AS NEW CARS

Although most newspapers highlighted only the requests for 1,580 new subway cars (980 to replace pre-war IRT cars, 400 to replace BMT pre-war cars and 200 for increased BMT-IND service via Chrystie St.), there were other items in the proposed TA budget that would improve the system. Stations would be lengthened to accommodate 10-car IND-BMT trains on BMT Fourth Ave., West End and Sea Beach lines. Another proposal is to replace manual switches in Coney Island Yard with electrically operated switches, and other yard improvements. Fluorescent lights would be installed in more stations and the BMT Jamaica line is to be third-tracked and sharp curves eliminated if NYCTA gets its way.

OUR WRITER RIDES AND REPORTS (A. J. Lonto)

One evening last month your editor observed the Stillwell Avenue-Coney Island terminal with not a BMT train there. There were R-27 trains on the Sea Beach, Brighton and West End and, of course, R-9's on the "D."

During the heavy travel hours for Sunday beach crowds, the BMT Brighton Local and Sea Beach Local-Exp. as well as West End and Fourth Ave. lines operate on an 8-minute headway. It is 10 minutes during most of the day. (Winter headway is 12 minutes.) Eight cars are operated on the Brighton and Sea Beach, 3 on Fourth Ave. and 4 on West End shuttles. The IND "D" trains now run 10-car trains for Sunday Coney Island crowds.

Fluorescent lights on the open cut stations of the Brighton line are turned off during the day on open portions of the stations; the under cover sections are lighted at all hours.

As of July 15th, all 230 R-27's were in service and 18 R-30's in service. At least one B-Type was seen on the Brighton Local July 17th. Expect to see R-27's and R-30's on the BMT Fourth Ave. Local any day.

NYCTA has permission to close permanently the drawbridge over Coney Island Creek used by Sea Beach, West End and yard trains. Very few boats have passed this way in recent years.

THE PARADE OF STREET CARS

BY

MELVIN ROSENBERG

It was a rather mild November twenty-third. People strolled about in the early misty morning, the men with their jackets open, the women wearing light summer suits. November, of 1912 was a rather ordinary morning but for two things- one was the mildness of the weather; the other concerns the subject of this article. For on that morning was held what was the only parade of street cars in the history of N.Y. City.

The parade centered about two men and the street cars they had designed. Frank Hedley and J. S. Doyle, both of the Interborough Rapid Transit Company, New York City's first subway system, had developed an entirely new type of streetcar. Now they would present all three major variations of their concept to the public in a parade that would show to all the great new developments in car design that would sweep the industry. The parade was to be run by the all-conduit New York Railways Company, a bright new star that had arisen from the shambles of the former great Metropolitan Street Railway that had once covered all of Manhattan in a web of horse and underground conduit lines.

Seven cars lined up on the Fiftieth Street side of the Seventh Avenue carhouse, between Broadway and Seventh Avenue, where 15 years later the Roxy Theatre was to stand. At 9:30 sharp, they swung into Broadway and proceeded downtown. President Theodore P. Shonts and Vice President Hedley of the company, representatives of the Public Service Commission and newspapermen accompanied the cars, as a squad of autos appeared and, taking the lead, announced the parade by blatting their horns. The autos sped down Broadway, followed by the streetcars.

Leading the cars came an ancient 1860 horsecar, representing a glorious past and a busy present- for horsecars still ran on many routes of the New York Railways System, including Avenue C, Bleecker St., Metropolitan Crosstown, 17-18 Sts., and Chambers St. The horsecar was sped down the street by a team of two horses- exactly double its normal motive power, and the horses were changed for relay mounts at several points.

Next came an early electric, single-trucker #176, which was built in 1890. Apparently no cable cars were in worthwhile condition, for this car was used not to illustrate an electric but as an example of a cablecar type.

New York Railways and its predecessor had been pioneers in the field of Pay As You Enter cars and the next two cars illustrated the early and later types. A double truck 1908-built PAYE followed an 1896 car that had been constructed just before PAYE experimentation got into full swing.

But the stars of the parade were its three last cars. First came battery car #7000, (See June '61 BULLETIN), a single truck version of the Hedley-Doyle hobble skirt car. This car included such interesting features as storage battery propulsion, a coal stove, automobile "band" brakes, a chain drive and a set of wheels set integrally into the body so as to conserve weight. Weight per passenger was a vital factor in reducing drainage on the battery power source, and on this original car it stood at 485 lb. per passenger. However, it was hoped to use lighter materials in the future and further reduce weight. Length overall was 28' 9"; width at sills: 6' 7". The door was operated by a bell-crank-connecting rod arrangement handled by the conductor, who stood at the center door. Appearing for the first time in public, the car caused a minor sensation. Although everything about the car was diminutive- passengers being allotted 17" of seat space, and that only by including the motorman's cab as part of the car by omitting the traditional partition of wood,- the car was extremely compact. Immediately after

the parade, #7000 began service on the Spring Street portion of the Metropolitan Crosstown, whose horsecars it was to replace.

Next came #5000, the first hobbleskirt car ever built. So named because of its stepless design so as to speed loading and unloading of ladies who were then wearing fashionable but tight "hobbleskirts." It was the forerunner of 176 New York Railways double-truck single-deckers. But right now, the car was veiled in a cloud of controversy. The "Public Welfare" car had caused such a sensation that New York Rys. had decided to have 320 additional models built. Although the company was making money, it did not have enough to buy the cars on a cash basis, and had applied to the Public Service Commission for permission to issue a special series of bonds for their purchase. An avalanche of controversy had descended upon the company immediately thereupon. One citizens' group sought an injunction against payment of other bonds' interest so as to insure payment of accident claims. Public Service Commissioner Milo R. Maltbie for the First District, brought out the old bogie about the traction company menace and hammered away at the proposed bond issue. Originally \$2,600,000 had been asked, \$1,600,000 of which was to have been used for 320 cars. This had been cut to \$1,050,000 for 175 cars, and \$550,000 for car house modernizations. Commissioner Maltbie, not satisfied, pressed unsuccessfully against the remaining sum on the grounds that the company's entire profit should go into the new cars, while any old cars scrapped could make up part of difference and the remaining difference could be made up out of depreciation funds. His point of view was quite prejudiced, as were the points of view of all too many of the contemporary public. Nevertheless, the company had just gotten permission to issue the smaller bond issue.

Last in line, and by any standard the most remarkable vehicle present was #6000, the "Broadway Battleship." The only doubledeck electric car in New York City's history, she gracefully glided along in majestic style. Although she was a double-decker, her 12' 10" height was less than some steam road coaches and her stepless construction gave her the balance of a low center of gravity. Her total seating capacity was 88, her overall length 44 feet. Weight per passenger was 522 lbs., total weight 46,000 lbs. She included a wealth of engineering feats, from her drop-sill construction to her two independent unit (lower deck and upper deck) concept of construction, and from such key details as narrow ends to eliminate overhang on curves to a stairway canted so as to drain rainwater and wash water smoothly out of the car, and not into the passengers' seats. It seemed "very similar in contour to the ceiling of a Pullman sleeping car," remarked one observer of the roof and ceiling design. Everyone felt that #6000 would be the forerunner of a whole fleet of doubledeck cars to rival London.

Unfortunately, all of those fond hopes were dashed. Not enough consideration had been given to certain economic figures. Although the company earned a gross profit of \$6,536,944 during the first six months of 1912, it earned a net profit of only \$377,228. A net profit of barely 5% was scarcely enough to have confidence in. The bond issue was made. The singledeck hobbleskirt cars were bought. In 1920, under the rising price pressures of the post World War I era, the company went bankrupt. In 1924, the last run of the "Broadway Battleship" was made. Older, more economical cars replaced the other hobbleskirt conduit cars, since the latter could not be converted for one-man operation. A handful of battery cars continued in operation on the Spring and Delancey Streets line, the last fragment of the last former horsecar line-Metropolitan Crosstown, until after 1930.

Messrs. Hedley and Doyle turned back to rapid transit pursuits, turning out a wide variety of firsts for the Interborough Rapid Transit

Company. Patents on turnstiles, ventilation, coasting-recording devices, push-button doors and many other items were put to practical use as soon as they could be developed.

Gradually, the street railway faded from Manhattan's streets, until, almost in hollow mockery of "The Parade," a ceremony was held on June 28, 1947 on 125 Street in front of Blumstein's Department Store. The last conduit run was made by Third Avenue Transit lightweight #191, and as the car drew up to its motorcoach replacement, a horsecar showed up. An emasculated vehicle fitted with rubber tires and cardboard sides, it halted briefly and passed on.

BANKRUPTCY FOR THE NEW YORK, NEW HAVEN & HARTFORD RAILROAD

On July 6th, President Kennedy's Press Secretary announced that the New Haven RR had been refused a 5½ million loan and the following day, the railroad filed for bankruptcy. At the present, only one other Class I railroad (out of 108 in U.S.) is in bankruptcy and that is the Georgia & Florida RR operating between Augusta, Ga. and Madison, Fla.

The NY, NH & H RR was formed in 1872 by the consolidation of the Hartford & New York RR and the New York and New Haven RR and acquired many small lines in the 1890's. In a 10-year period before World War I, NHRR borrowed over \$200 million to buy up steamship companies, trolley lines and warehouses. Before 1900, the NHRR stock was one of the safest and was paying a \$10 annual dividend while the Santa Fe, the Union Pacific, and the Norfolk & Western were in receivership. The New Haven continued "solid" until after World War I.

In the early 1930's, the New Haven started losing money because of the depression and competition from automobiles and trucks, and began borrowing from the Reconstruction Finance Corp. After that Government agency rejected a \$5 million loan request in October 1935, the road went into bankruptcy and Howard S. Palmer was appointed trustee. Its 2,000 miles had been cut to 1,800 when it came out of bankruptcy in '47. Palmer, who spent 40 years with the railroad, became president until ousted in a proxy fight in 1948 by the late Frederic C. Dumaine, Sr., a multi-millionaire textile executive, who put L.F. Whittemore into the presidency. The following year, at 82, Mr. Dumaine assumed the presidency himself and began a tremendous personnel shakeup, reduced the labor force by 2,000, abandoned unprofitable branch lines as fast as permitted and embarked on an ambitious equipment purchase and mechanization program. The elder Dumaine died in May 1951 and his son, "Buck" succeeded him and continued many of the same policies, including "plowing back" millions into the railroad. It was charged that properties were being "over maintained." Patrick B. McGinnis, who had advised the elder Dumaine, criticised "Buck" and in 1954, he ousted the younger Dumaine in a proxy battle. In his first year, McGinnis raised the net income by certain bookkeeping procedures, but earnings fell the next year and NH suffered \$17 million storm damages. The storm damages coupled with other factors, some probably traceable to McGinnis's economies caused a sharp deterioration in the railroad's performance and McGinnis resigned Jan. 20, 1956. Opening of the Connecticut Turnpike and other New England highways no doubt contributed greatly to the railroad's downfall. George Alpert, a Boston attorney without previous railroad experience, succeeded McGinnis and appealed for tax relief, government loans and subsidies to keep the railroad running.

On July 7th, 1961, he announced to the Board of Directors: "Our Battle to save the New Haven Railroad from bankruptcy has been lost."