

Electric Railroads

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NEW YORK WESTCHESTER & BOSTON RAILWAY

by *Karl Groh*

E.R.A. 627

ELECTRIC RAILROADS is the historical feature magazine published by the ELECTRIC RAILROADERS ASSOCIATION, INC 145 Greenwich St., New York 6, N. Y. for distribution to its members and sale to the public.

ELECTRIC RAILROADS is edited and prepared by George E. Horn (ERA #491). Price per copy for this issue is \$1. The photo above was taken by Leonard Woynicz (ERA #329)



A southbound 10-car train was made up for this photo for the New York Public Service Commission.
(Robert L. Presbrey (ERA #804))

That the New York, Westchester & Boston was one of the finest electric railways in existence is a fact seldom disputed. It had everything in its favor except perhaps the most important ingredient of success-sufficient traffic to keep it alive. Because this year would have seen the 50th Anniversary of its opening, had the railroad kept running, this issue of ELECTRIC RAILROADS has been prepared. This story is based upon a series of articles originally appearing in FLASHES & ASHES, the official publication of the New York Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society. The Editor wishes to thank Mr. Karl Groh (ERA #627) and the NRHS for permission to reprint portions of the material which appeared in the August, September, October and November, 1954 Issues.

A mild dispute goes on among railroad "fans" as to the classification of this railroad. Some claim that it was an interurban railway such as is still seen in the Chicago, South Shore & South Bend Railroad while others maintain it was a Class I electrified line such as is seen in the Lackawanna Railroad or the New Haven Railroad. Whatever merits each show in support of their

claim, the undisputable fact remains that here was a first class railroad running through suburban territory that was torn up and forgotten within 30 years of its opening. A small part of its southern end has been converted to rapid transit use by the Interborough Rapid Transit Division of the New York City Transit System, but the remainder of the line has been put to use as automobile roads, developed into housing areas, or just left for the weeds to take over. Those who try to hike over the right-of-way remains come across open areas where immense steel viaducts once spanned busy highways, ruins of stations that were built in a classic style of architecture to enhance the surroundings that it was hoped would develop as well as other reminders of the lavish hand that constructed this line to make it the finest commuting road in the nation.

Despite the fact that fans were busy in those depression years adding to their picture collections and taking last rides as railway lines succumbed to the so-called march of progress, only one one was on hand to see the dying gasp on a snow covered night as the old "Wobble and Bounce" came to a sad demise. No crepe or

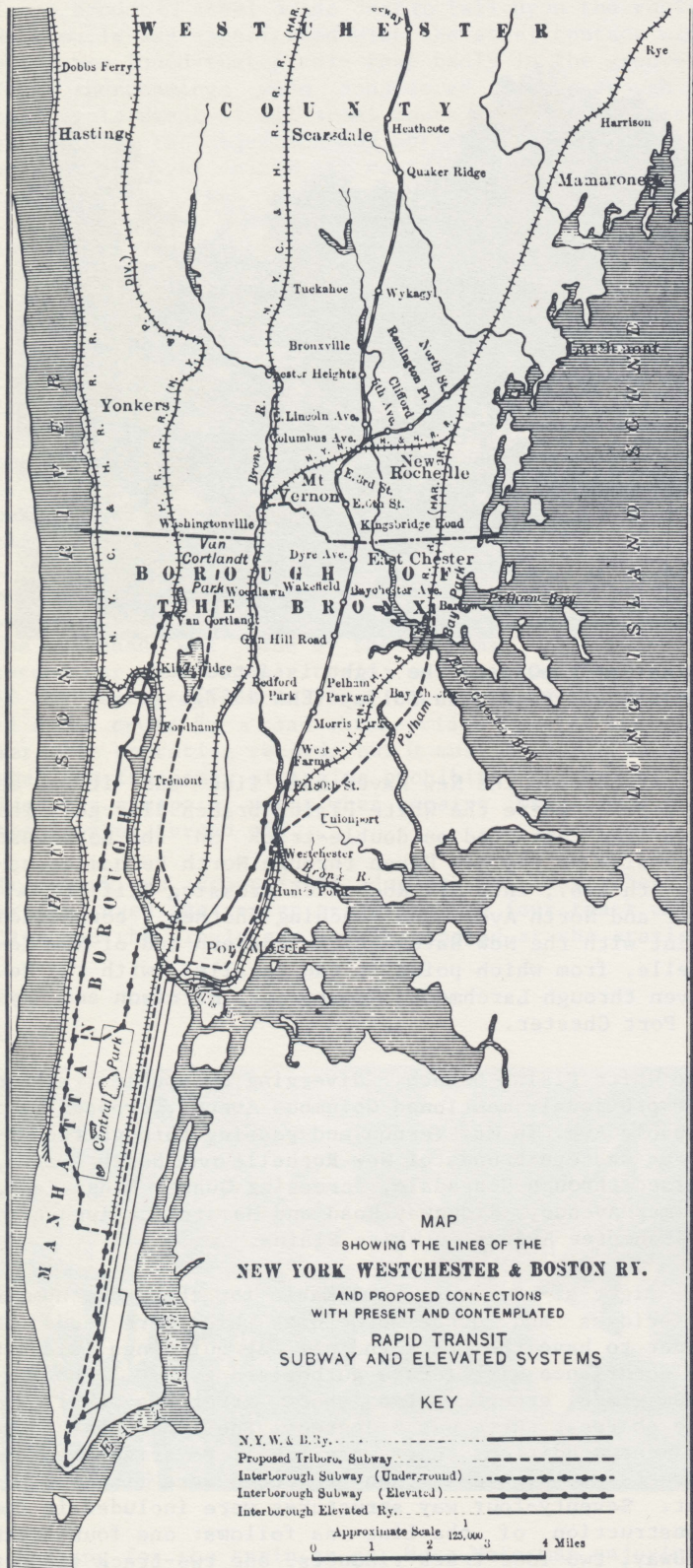
signs decorated the last train, no flashbulbs popped for picture taking, no newspapermen on hand for interviews, just the heavy hearts of the train crew as they brought Train #706, with five passengers on board into North Avenue station on schedule, 26 minutes after 1938 came into being.

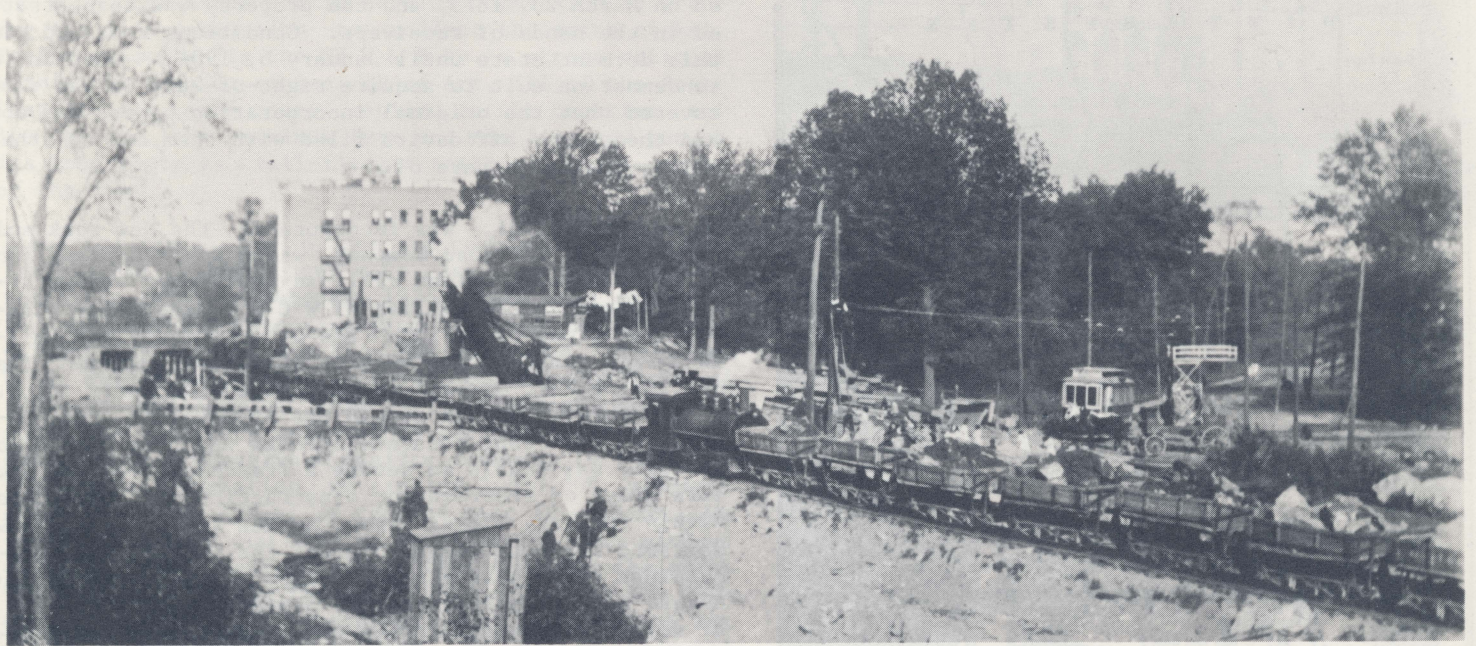
The railroad came into being just as quietly as it had gone out when, on March 20, 1872, the New York, West Chester & Boston Railway Company was organized to construct a 32 mile route from Fort Schuyler on Long Island Sound to Port Chester via New Rochelle. There was not much activity however and the company was foreclosed on March 23, 1875, and the property was sequestrated in the hands of receivers. Conditions remained in this dormant state until January 6, 1904, when in a condemnation suit to acquire right-of-way, it was discovered that the original incorporation papers had not had the proper affidavits filed with them and so that matter was taken care of.

On April 3, 1901, was incorporated the New York and Port Chester Railroad Company which was organized for building an electrified railroad route over essentially the same as the earlier NY W C & B which had planned upon steam operation. The other company was halted in its construction work by an injunction and the New York & Port Chester was organized to carry it on. The NY & PC, although it had the approval of the majority of the towns consents through which it had to go through, was unable to secure a franchise from the New York Board of Aldermen for construction and operation within the city limits. When the New York, New Haven & Hartford Railroad began to enter the picture, all proceedings took on an air of secrecy. It was rumored that August Belmont helped promote peace in the matter but at any rate, the end result was that the NY NH & H acquired control of both companies in 1906, and then began to pour money into the construction through a subsidiary, the Millbrook Company. Finally, on January 18, 1910, the New York & Port Chester and the New York West Chester and Boston Railway were merged into the New York, Westchester & Boston Railway Company. About this time also, the plans were dropped for the line to Long Island Sound near Fort Schuyler.

Westchester County, an undeveloped area of meadows and gently rolling hills just north of New York City was eyed for future home development as the metropolis to the south was filling up. Several other railroads already were running through the county with the New Haven serving the towns along the Long Island Sound shore and the New York Central owned and controlled lines generally serving the central and the Hudson River edges. With the development of high speed electrified traction, expansion of facilities were planned which included new track and roadbed, multiple-unit operation, larger and more modern terminal capacities and the hoped for increased passenger revenues.

The New York, Westchester & Boston, in its methods of construction and operation, was essentially a high speed interurban line operating entirely on private right-of-way in a territory that is still mainly suburban in nature. It was built through a district of sparse settlement but the builders had the courage and belief that the territory served would build up considerably, therefore went ahead with a railway enterprise that was without parallel in the country at that time. The road was built to such a high standard that it was on a plane with the best of steam railroads. With the electrical equipment considered in addition





A rare view of digging the cut at Fulton Avenue, looking North. Off to the right is a trolley of the Tuckahoe Line of the old Westchester Electric Railroad. From John Tolley (ERA #557).

to the other features of construction, the line was the equal from a physical standpoint with the nearby New Haven and New York Central electrified zones. The entire line was built on private right-of-way without grade crossings. Alternating current was chosen for the propulsion because it was proven practical on the newly electrified New Haven main line from Woodlawn, N. Y. to Stamford, Conn. But the Westchester & Boston was unique in that it was the only strictly suburban electric railway in the United States which was not built up from an older road nor, was it an electrification of an existing steam road. Yet, it had all the aspects of a heavy duty railroad because it was built to comply with the most arduous conditions that high speed electric traction requires.

The line from the Harlem River to E. 174th Street used under a perpetual agreement the tracks of the New Haven. Between these two points, the New Haven was a six track line, the two westernmost tracks used exclusively by the Westchester & Boston. At E. 174 St., these 2 tracks diverged from the New Haven and ran northwest to E. 180th St. and Morris Park Ave. Shortly after leaving the New Haven, the two tracks became four for the main line of the NY W & B from E. 180 St. to Columbus Ave., Mount Vernon. The line continued across successively Pelham Parkway, Gun Hill Rd., E. 222d St. Baychester Ave., Boston Post Rd. and Dyre Ave. within the New York City limits. After crossing Dyre Ave., the line entered Westchester County through Mt. Vernon and crossed E. 6th St., E. 3rd St., to Columbus Ave. where

it passed over the New Haven main line and it was at this point where the White Plains branch diverged. The main line continued on double-track on the northwest side of the New Haven through North Pelham crossing 5th Ave., into New Rochelle, crossing Clifford, Webster and North Aves. and reaching another connection point with the New Haven at the eastern end of New Rochelle, from which point it ran parallel with the New Haven through Larchmont, Mamaroneck, Harrison and Rye to Port Chester.

The White Plains branch, diverging on double track at the previously mentioned Columbus Avenue, crossed East Lincoln Ave. in Mt. Vernon and passing through the extreme western bounds of New Rochelle over North Avenue, passed through Scarsdale, crossing Quaker Ridge Road, Palmer Avenue, Ridgeway Road and Mamaroneck Avenue to Westchester Avenue in White Plains.

The right-of-way was remarkable for the great number of bridges and other structures which were needed in order to have the track and all way buildings laid out in accordance with future authorized grades. The maximum grade, except on two short stretches was 1% and the sharpest curve was 6 degrees. The line was built to meet conditions that were likely to arise when the streets and highways then projected were finally laid out. Seventy-four way structures were included in the construction of the line as follows: one four-track subway, two four-track viaducts, one two-track viaduct, 43 railway bridges, 23 highway crossings and four con-

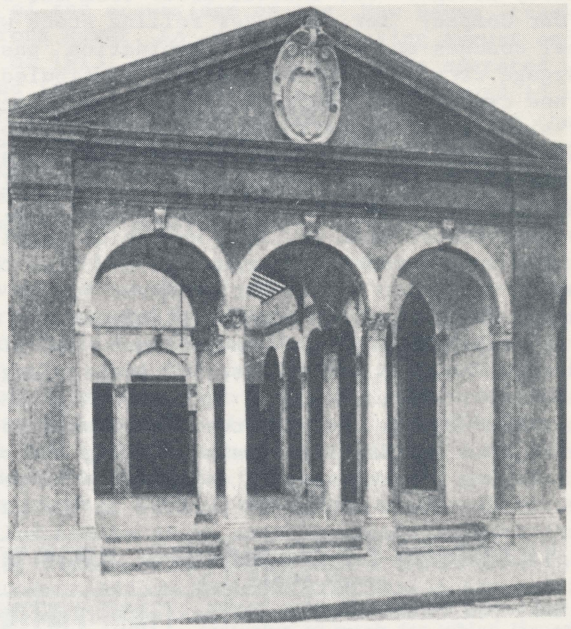
RIGHT - An open car of the W.E.R.R. crosses over the temporary bridge spanning the site of the yet-to-built Wykagyl Station (J.Tolley)



crete arches. The subway runs north for 3490 feet from the Morris Park station, extending from Paulding Avenue to Mace Avenue. Construction of this subway was required by franchise and right-of-way conditions. The property owners built a street over the roof of the structure, naming it "Esplanade". The longer four track viaduct runs from approximately E. 175th to E. 180th St. and is 2100 feet long. It crosses seven streets and forms part of the E. 180th St. station. This viaduct and subway are still intact since they are the property of the City of New York. The four-track viaduct at Columbus Avenue that crossed over the New Haven included the longest railway bridge which had 116 foot girders. Their concrete abutments are still intact and can be seen from the train windows when passing the Columbus Avenue station of the New Haven. The longest highway crossing was at North Avenue, New Rochelle which was 138 feet long.

The passenger stations and way structures were the most attractive group of buildings possessed by any steam or electric railroad in the country. The W & B was anxious to erect buildings which would add rather than detract from the expected high class suburban development of the territory. All of the design of the office buildings, stations, interlocking towers, and way buildings were in the modernized renaissance or mission style of architecture. Stations were designed for a maximum capacity far exceeding the initial requirements and space for store rental was provided at most of the stations. The extensive use of concrete lent itself to the addition of cast cement cartouche ornamentation of several designs, including a Mercury head and wings in various combinations, indeed appropriate emblems for a high speed electric railway. All of the stations were built on two levels with the main building and the waiting rooms either above or below the long, canopied platforms.

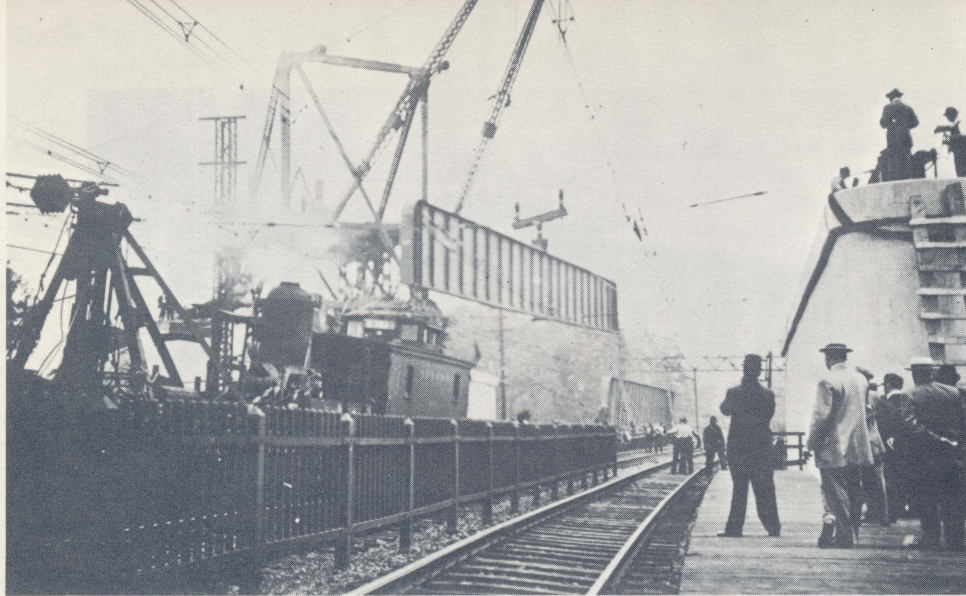
Track was 90 lbs. to the yard laid on creosoted ties laid in crushed rock ballast throughout. Single phase alternating current (AC) electricity at 11,000 volts flowing in the compound catenary overhead propelled the all steel Multiple-Unit cars. Power was purchased at a flat rate from the New Haven Railroad generating station at Cos Cob and was delivered by .0000 feeders down at Columbus Ave. where two feeders went south along the four track line to the Bronx and two feeders went north to White Plains. Pantographs on the MU cars collected the 11,000 volts and transformers stepped it down to 350 volts to the two 175hp. AC traction motors per car.



New York, Westchester & Boston—Entrance and Facade of Third Street Station. Mount Vernon



New York, Westchester & Boston—Emblematic Decorations Used on Stations, Bridges, Etc.



LEFT - A crane hoists a 40-ton steel girder into place on the Columbus Av. viaduct on June 18, 1911. Some early day railfans were on hand to see the job done which, by the way, did not interfere with New Haven traffic. RIGHT - Traveling crane moves south after placing steel into position on the Columbus Avenue viaduct. Temporary connecting track for bringing in supplies to contractors building the NY W & B leads off on trestle at the left. (Collection of John Tolley)

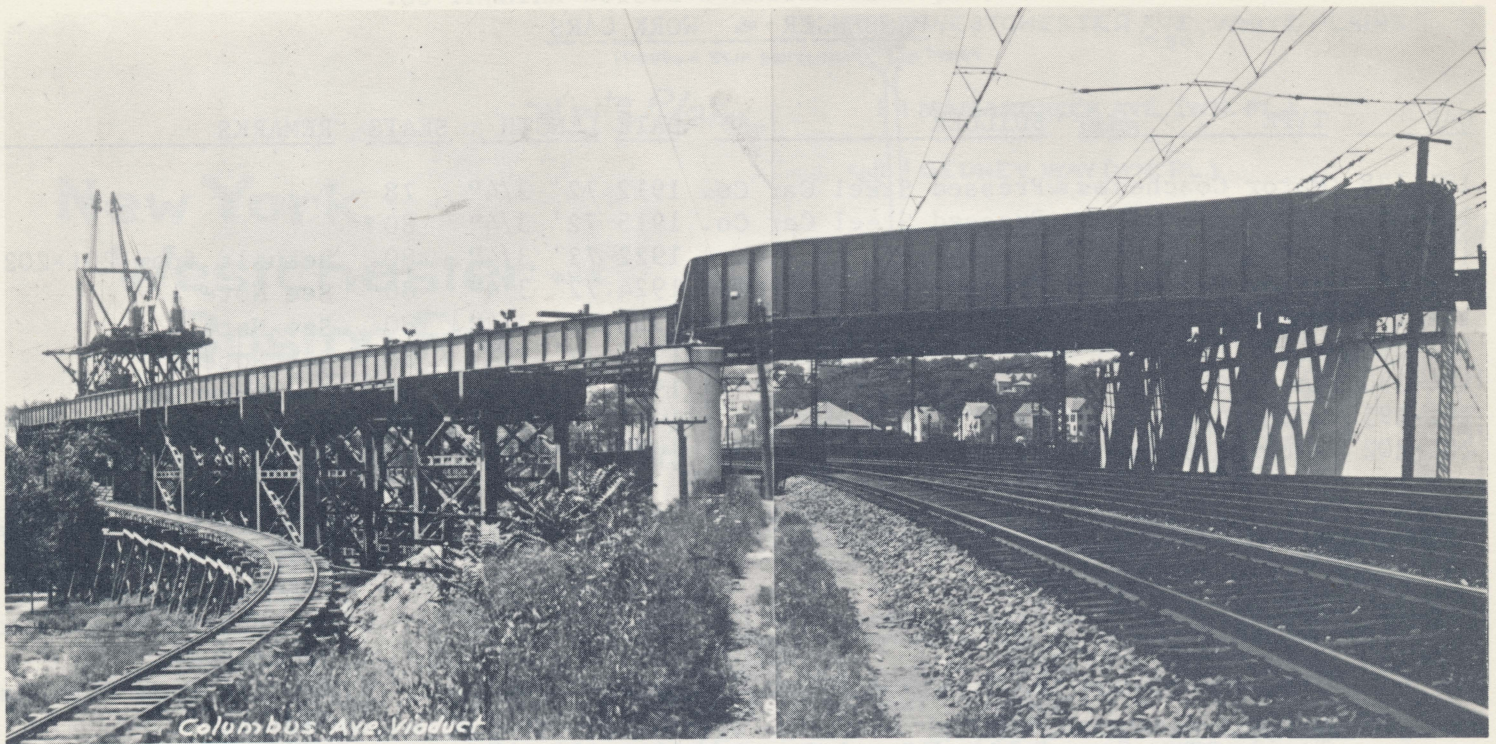
The cars ordered for the line were of the most modern and sturdy design. The initial order from the Pressed Steel Car Company for passenger rolling stock was for 28 steel coaches and two steel combination passenger and baggage cars. These cars had full vestibuled platforms and center side doors which were power operated. Center-side doors on railroad cars were an innovation at that time and the previously opened IRT subway with which the NY W & B was to connect with were still operating cars that had no doors at this location. All of the Westchester line stations were high-level platforms but to provide for emergencies and also to permit their operation on the Harlem River branch of the New Haven, which had low station platforms, a flight of three steps was provided under each end platform trap door. The cars were 70 feet, 4 inches long; nine feet, 7 inches wide; 13 feet, 3½ inches high and they weighed 119,000 lbs. ready to run. There were 35 cross seats and four longitudinal seats flanking the center doors, giving a total seating capacity of 78 persons. The combination cars seated 54 persons in the passenger compartment. These cars were designed and built and were considered the latest word in MU equipment in 1912. Except for the paired arch windows and the compound arch roof, they presented a modern appearance right down to the end of the road's operation in 1937. Interesting to note is that at least one steam railroad, the Erie bought cars of this design (minus the center doors) for their steam drawn commuter service, most of which are still in service today.

The signal system of the Westchester & Boston was patterned after that installed on the New Haven because of the joint use of the trackage in the Bronx. It was planned with regard to the future installation of automatic train stops (which was never done, however). The interlocking plants, signal system and telephone system on the NY W & B were very high in initial cost, but it was thought at the time that provision for future requirements would effect savings in the cost of operation and maintenance. The entire signal system was installed by the Union Switch & Signal Company. With the exception of the New Haven, this was the only installation at the time of a complete signal system on a line using alternating propulsion current. When DC is used as a propulsion current, no problems arise as to conflict between the DC return in the rails and the AC track signal circuits. But, when AC is used as a propulsion current several problems arise in the handling of the signal currents, the most important of which is the separation of the signal current in the

track circuits and the return current of the trains. This was solved by adopting the use of 60-cycle current for the signal system and using impedance bonds at normally insulated track joints. This effectively insulated the track circuit blocks but allowed the 25 cycle propulsion current to return to the powerhouse. This system of signalling was in its infancy when the road was being built but the Union Switch & Signal Co. engineers ironed out all the "bugs" and the signals gave little trouble after this. The excellent telephone system was installed by the Western Electric Co. and it was the latest word in railroad communications systems at the time of its installation.

Seven interlocking plants were installed for the operation of main line switches. All were equipped with Union Switch & Signal Company's type "F" all-electric system, then the latest word in interlocking plants, tailor made for high speed and dense traffic. In the small towers, where it was not necessary to have a leverman in constant attendance, the signals for direct movements automatically operated the same as block signals. Thus through trains passed these points without the attention of a towerman. The most congested interlocking was at the junction of Columbus Avenue because of the grade crossing of the New Rochelle express and White Plains local trains and of locals from New Rochelle with expresses from White Plains. Train movements had to be made with the utmost dispatch. The express station at East 3rd Street was selected as the starting point of the timetable which was so drawn that passengers could transfer between expresses and locals in both directions without delay. It was planned to have a White Plains local arrive with a New Rochelle express and a New Rochelle local with a White Plains express. The following example will attest to the excellence of the Columbus Avenue interlocking plant. Should a White Plains local and a New Rochelle express leave East 3rd Street at the same time, the trains moved together until the local stopped at the Columbus Avenue station. In this time the express must pass the local, cross over in front of it and clear the interlocking plant before the arrival of the local bound for White Plains. This was figured to be 11.5 seconds in which the interlocking signal may be cleared before the local train reached it. It was really a rapid transit type of operation that worked to perfection.

The car repair shop was located just north of the 180th Street station and was an example of the latest development in shop maintenance construction. The impres-



sion could be gained that the shop was too small to handle the work involved by the large cars of the line but its operation showed that such was not the case. This was due to the policy of having every facility and item of shop equipment strategically placed and to an adequate supply of repair parts. Aside from possible wrecks, it was planned to keep cars requiring repairs or inspection in the shop no longer than half a day. No catenary wire was brought into the shop so as to reduce the danger of high voltage inside. Cars were switched in and out by an electric switching locomotive that was also used for freight service and transfer work to the tracks of the New Haven Railroad. The catenary trolley wire dead-ended 50 feet outside of the shop so that when cars were moved, a dead car was interposed between the locomotive and cars in the shop. Thus the interior of the shop was free of very high voltage and 32-volt electropneumatic MU control circuits could be worked on and tested without danger to the shop workers.

The operating record of the railroad served to prove to those who doubted the ability of the small shop to care of the rolling stock. This shop was a marvel of its day and the 30 MU cars were maintained at a cost of about 2¢ per car-mile, a very low figure, even for those days. The shop was busy even before the road opened for passenger service, however. During the course of construction, the electric locomotive hauling two flat cars loaded with 120 tons of rails collided with a passenger car at a standstill while the locomotive, weighing 80 tons, was moving at about 15 miles per hour. Damage to the MU car was rather severe but was confined to one end platform. The collision broke the drawbar and its fastenings and the car mounted the locomotive end frame. The sills were not badly bent so were straightened out by the shop blacksmith and a helper, but on the MU car, new steps, corner posts and end door frames had to be riveted into place after the damaged parts were cut out. This was all quite simple for had it been a wooden car, a large force of carpenters would have had to go to work on the car. This was

rather a strong argument for the steel car advocates who heard the shops referred to as a "glorified tin shop".

The original terminal agreement between the New York & New Haven RR and the New York & Harlem RR in 1848 for the joint use of old Grand Central Depot called for the payment of 18¢ per capita by the New Haven RR for passengers brought to or taken from the old Depot. When the new Grand Central Terminal was opened in 1912, the New York Central & Hudson River RR upped this figure to 24¢ per capita. The New Haven realized that it had the need for the continued use of Grand Central for through passengers, but hoped that the lower rates of fare on the NY W & B would attract most of their commuters away from the newly reconstructed Grand Central. In short, the New Haven expected frugal Westchesterites to patronize the NY W & B and take the Interborough Rapid Transit subway downtown rather than ride all the way into Grand Central and help pay for it.

The method of fare collection used on the road was based on the 5¢ zone system. There were originally eight zones, the longest zone being that portion of the line within the City of New York. The original franchise agreement with the City of New York called for a 5¢ ride between any stations located between the Harlem River and Dyre Avenue. The zone system of fare collection used on the NY W & B did not require passengers, whether occasional or commuting, to show tickets on the train. This method of fare collection was novel in American railway practice and was patterned after the system in use in London and other European zoned railways. A ticket was bought at the station of origin good to the zone of the station of departure. The customer then boarded a train but did not surrender the ticket until depositing it in the ticket choppers box at the point of departure. Commuters had their tickets punched at the entering station and inspected by ticket chopper at the leaving station. Two styles of tickets were necessary for each zone.

(Text continued on Page 11)

NEW YORK, WESTCHESTER & BOSTON RAILWAY CO.
PASSENGER & WORK CARS

CAR	TYPE	BUILDER	DATE	LENGTH	SEATS	REMARKS
101-128	Motor Coaches	Pressed Steel Car Co.	1912	72' 3/4"	78	
129-138	Motor Coaches	Pressed Steel Car Co.	1915	72' 3/4"	80	
139-140	Motor Coaches	N. Y. W & B Ry. Co.	1922	72' 3/4"	80	Rebuilt from 201-202
141-150	Motor Coaches	Pressed Steel Car Co.	1924	72' 3/4"	80	See Note 1
151-170	Motor Coaches	Pressed Steel Car Co.	1926	72' 3/4"	80	See Note 1
171-180	Motor Coaches	Osgood-Bradley	1927	72' 3/4"	80	See Note 1
181-190	Motor Coaches	Osgood-Bradley	1927	72' 3/4"	80	See Note 1
191-195	Motor Coaches	N. Y. W & B Ry. Co.	1928	72' 3/4"	80	Rebuilt from 501-505
201-202	Motor Combine	Pressed Steel Car Co.	1912	72' 3/4"	54	Rebuilt to Coaches 139-140 in 1922
501-505	Trailer Coaches	Pressed Steel Car Co.	1915	72' 3/4"	80	Rebuilt to Motor Cars 191-195 in 1928
1-4	Trailer Flat	Pressed Steel Car Co.	1911	40' 3/4"		#4 Rebuilt in 1915 to Caboose #4
4	Trailer Caboose	N. Y. W & B Ry. Co.	1915	40' 3/4"		Rebuilt from Flat Car #4.
5	Trailer Box Car	Pressed Steel Car Co.	1911	40' 1 1/2"		
01	B B Electric Locomotive	Baldwin-Westinghouse	1911	37' 0"		Renumbered to 301 in 1914, then to 701 in 1928. See Note 2.
X-1	Gasoline Propell- ed Work Car	Pressed Steel Car Co	1911	59' 1"		Combination line and wrecking car with re- volving jib crane and detachable linemans platform on boom. See Note 3.

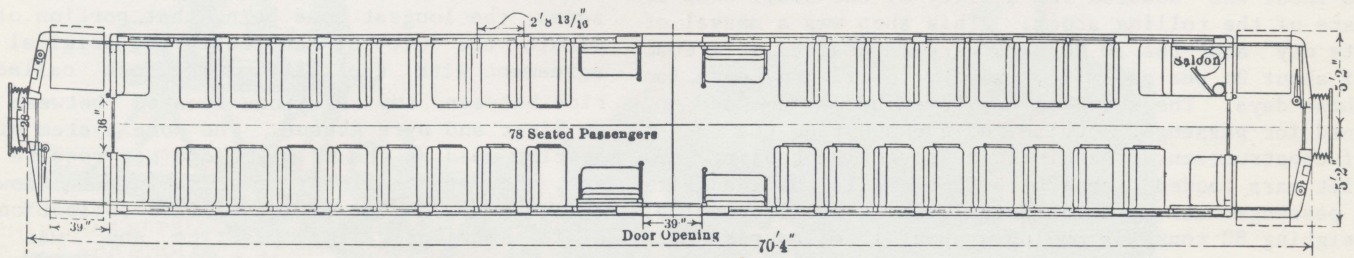
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Note 1 - Cars 141-190 were leased from the New York, New Haven & Hartford Railroad and were returned to them at the cessation of service. Car #149 was named the "ROBERT M. SHAW" in 1924 in honor of the road's oldest commuter. Plaques were mounted over the exterior centre doors and over motormans cab door.

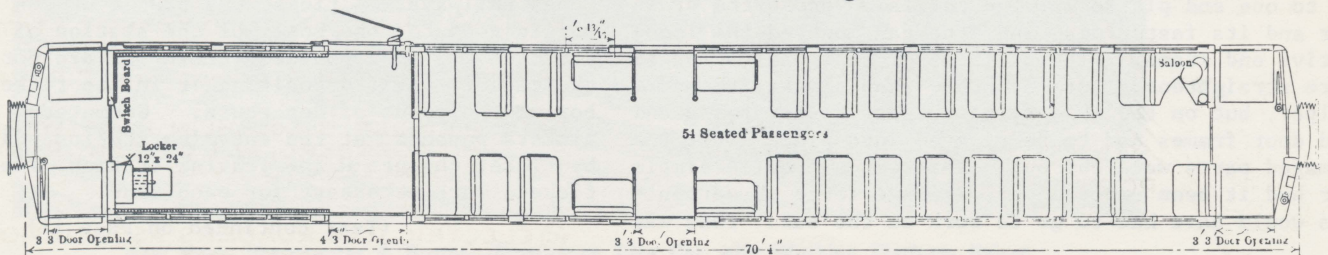
Note 2 - Locomotive #701 was turned over to the NY NH & H RR where it was renumbered 0224

Note 3 - Renumbered 401 in 1914, the crane car was used in dismantling the road during World War II, by Lipsett, Inc. and then was scrapped by them.

Passenger car interiors painted dark green with ivory ceilings and blue plush seats.

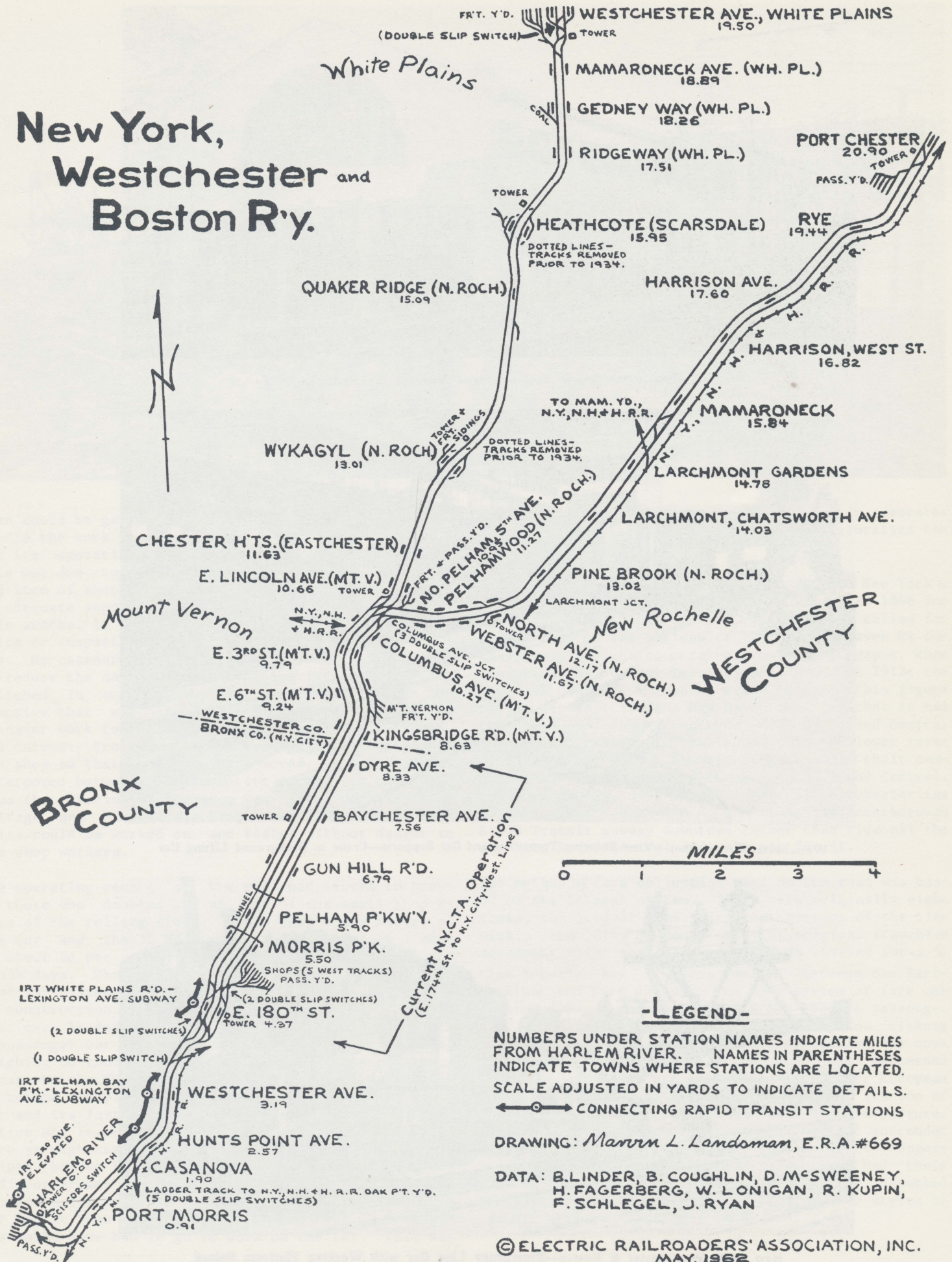


Westchester Cars—Floor Plan of Passenger Coach



Westchester Cars—Floor Plan of Combination Car

New York, Westchester and Boston R'y.



FRT. Y'D. WESTCHESTER AVE., WHITE PLAINS 19.50
(DOUBLE SLIP SWITCH) TOWER

White Plains

MAMARONECK AVE. (WH. PL.) 18.89

GEDNEY WAY (WH. PL.) 18.26

RIDGEWAY (WH. PL.) 17.51

PORT CHESTER 20.90
PASS. Y'D. TOWER

RYE 19.44

HEATHCOTE (SCARSDALE) 15.95
DOTTED LINES - TRACKS REMOVED PRIOR TO 1934.

QUAKER RIDGE (N. ROCH.) 15.09

HARRISON AVE. 17.60

HARRISON, WEST ST. 16.82

TO MAM. Y'D., N.Y., N.H. & H.R.R.

MAMARONECK 15.84

LARCHMONT GARDENS 14.78

LARCHMONT, CHATSWORTH AVE. 14.03

WYKAGYL (N. ROCH.) 13.01
TOWER & SIDINGS

DOTTED LINES - TRACKS REMOVED PRIOR TO 1934.

NO. PELHAM 5TH AVE. 11.27

CHESTER H'TS. (EASTCHESTER) 11.63

E. LINCOLN AVE. (MT. V.) 10.66
TOWER

Mount Vernon

N.Y., N.H. & H.R.R.

E. 3RD ST. (MT. V.) 9.79

E. 6TH ST. (MT. V.) 9.24

WESTCHESTER CO. BRONX CO. (N.Y. C.I.R.)

COLUMBUS AVE. JCT. (3 DOUBLE SLIP SWITCHES) 10.27

COLUMBUS AVE. (MT. V.) 10.27

M'T. VERNON FRT. Y'D.

KINGSBRIDGE RD. (MT. V.) 8.63

PINE BROOK (N. ROCH.) 13.02

LARCHMONT JCT.

NORTH AVE. (N. ROCH.) 12.17

WEBSTER AVE. (N. ROCH.) 11.67

WESTCHESTER COUNTY

BRONX COUNTY

DYRE AVE. 8.33

BAYCHESTER AVE. 7.56

GUN HILL R'D. 6.79

PELHAM P'KW'Y. 5.90

MORRIS P'K. 5.50
SHOPS (5 WEST TRACKS)
PASS. Y'D.

Current N.Y.C.T.A. operation (E. 174th St. to N.Y. City West Line)

IRT WHITE PLAINS R'D. - LEXINGTON AVE. SUBWAY

(2 DOUBLE SLIP SWITCHES)

(1 DOUBLE SLIP SWITCH)

IRT PELHAM BAY P'K. - LEXINGTON AVE. SUBWAY

WESTCHESTER AVE. 3.19

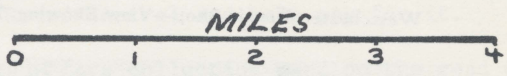
HUNTS POINT AVE. 2.57

CASANOVA 1.90

LADDER TRACK TO N.Y., N.H. & H. R.R. OAK P.T. Y'D. (5 DOUBLE SLIP SWITCHES)

PORT MORRIS 0.91

IRT 340 AVE. ELEVATED
HARLEM RIVER
SLIPSTOPS SWITCH
PASS. Y'D.



-LEGEND-

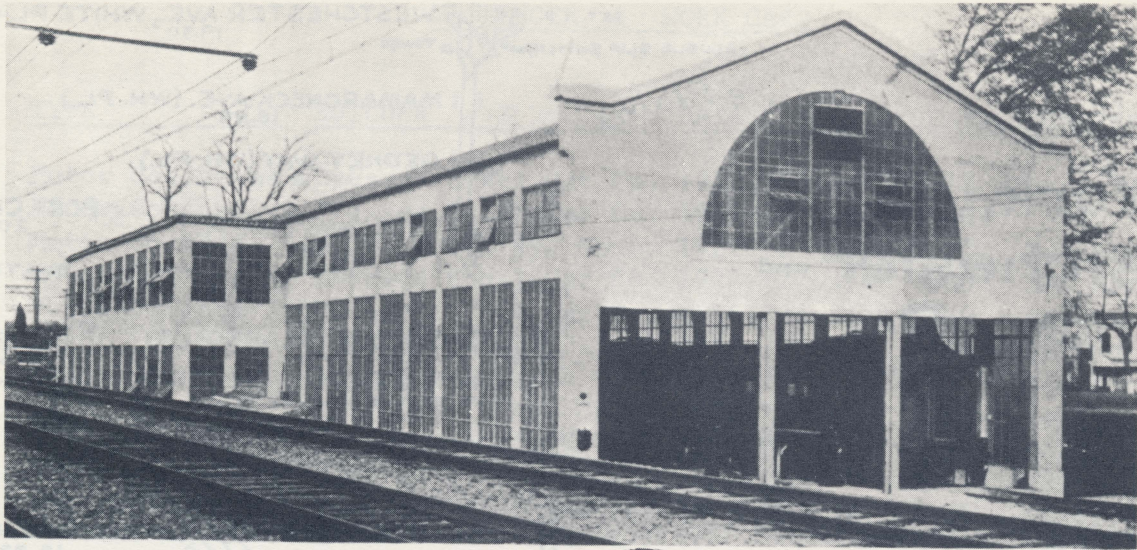
NUMBERS UNDER STATION NAMES INDICATE MILES FROM HARLEM RIVER. NAMES IN PARENTHESES INDICATE TOWNS WHERE STATIONS ARE LOCATED. SCALE ADJUSTED IN YARDS TO INDICATE DETAILS.

◀○▶ CONNECTING RAPID TRANSIT STATIONS

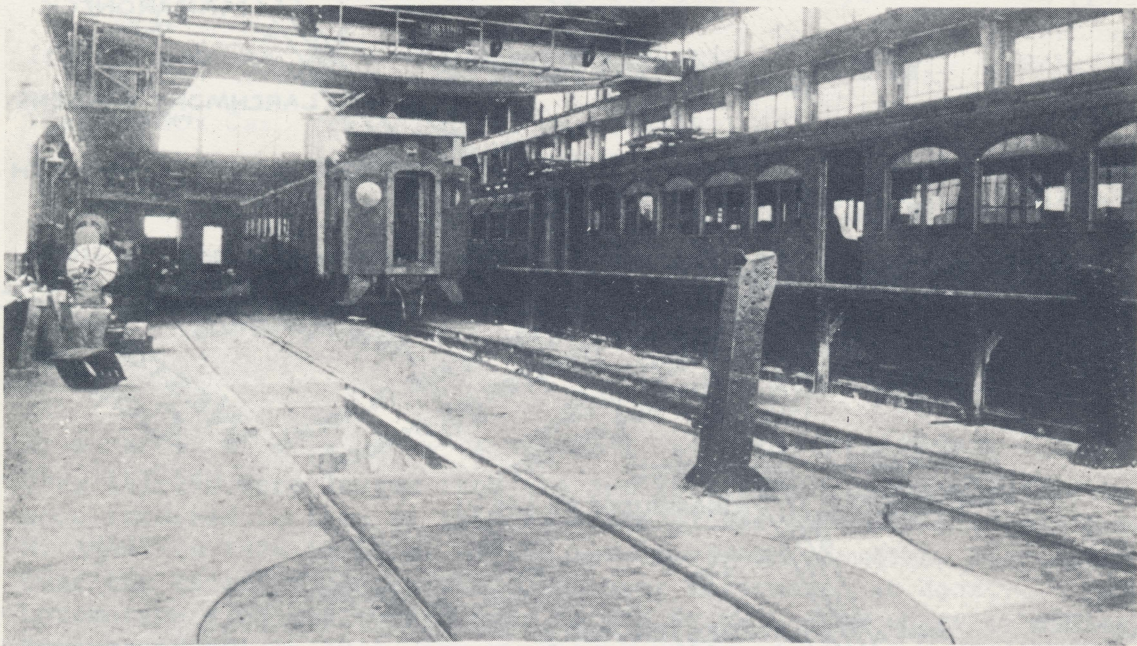
DRAWING: *Marrin L. Landsman, E.R.A.#669*

DATA: B.LINDER, B. COUGHLIN, D. McSWEENEY, H. FAGERBERG, W. LONIGAN, R. KUPIN, F. SCHLEGEL, J. RYAN

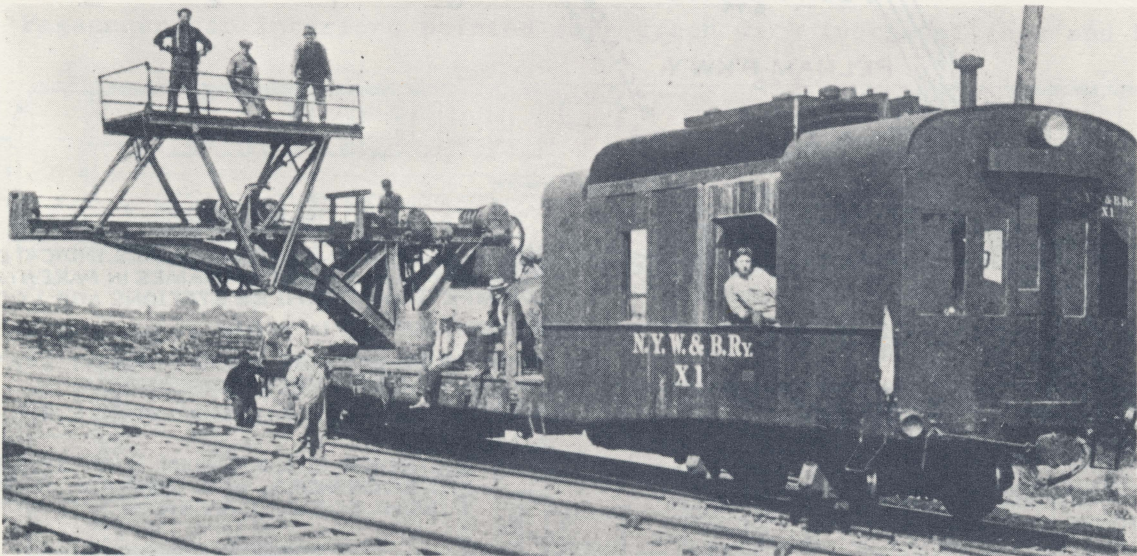
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Westchester Repair Shop—Exterior View of the Building



Westchester Repair Shop—View Showing Turntables and Car Supports—Crane in Background Lifting Car



New York, Westchester & Boston—Emergency Line Car with Working Platform Raised

Because there were only eight zones, it was feasible to adopt a distinctive ticket color for each zone, as follows: New York - red, Mount Vernon - green, Wykagyl - pink, Quaker Ridge - blue, Heathcote - yellow, Ridgeway - lavender, White Plains -white and New Rochelle - gray. Thus only red tickets were good for a ride either between stations in the New York zone itself or from any other zone to stations in the New York zone. This meant that every ticket surrendered for a ride at a station in the New York zone must be red. Therefore the ticket chopper could detect overriding of zones much more easily than if he had to read the lettering on all tickets. Each ticket agent was accordingly provided with tickets for each of the eight zones and a two color ticket that was issued to cover a 5c ride two stations in length when the stations were in different zones. The colors used were those of adjoining zones.

Passenger operations began between E. 180th St. in the Bronx and North Avenue, New Rochelle on May 29, 1912 a distance of 7.77 miles. Single car trains operating on a base headway of 20 minutes, making all stops, was the initial operation of the NY W & B until July 1st, when the White Plains branch was opened for passenger service from E. 180th St. to Westchester Avenue, White Plains, a distance of 15.08 miles. Then single car locals and expresses (two car expresses during the rush) operated between White Plains, New Rochelle and 180th Street on the same 20 minute base headway 24 hours a day. Trains leaving the two northern terminals were alternately a local and an express from each terminal and direct transfer was made at East 3rd St. station in Mount Vernon, where passengers could transfer from a local to an express or vice versa. The trains from both directions met at East 3rd St. with clockwork precision so that no matter which branch the passenger desired to take, he had his choice of a local or express train.

The initial service began with 30 cars but as the railway was extended additional cars were needed and between 1924 and 1929, additional equipment was added to the roster of passenger rolling stock so that there was a total of 95 cars. The later cars were slightly longer and heavier than the original group, but were generally identical in construction and design. They were nicknamed "Bull Mooses" by New Haven train crews because of their two porthole windows and the slope of the roof with the diaphragms which slightly represented that animals appearance. The cars were painted in the green color of the New Haven Railroad with the NY W & B name and car number above the last window in the arch. The New Haven Railroad bought the last group of cars and stencilled NY NH & HRRCo on the car sides near each end door.

From May, 1912, to August 3rd, the new passengers that began to use the Westchester, were whisked from their homes along the line to E. 180th St. where they then had to trudge six blocks to reach the Bronx Park station of the IRT subway. From August 3rd however, the lower segment of the line from 180th St. to the Harlem River at 133rd Street was opened which provided a direct access to the 2nd & 3rd Avenue elevated lines. It was indeed aboon to those passengers desiring to reach

the east side of Manhattan, but those whose business took them to the west side had the long walk to the subway at E. 180th St. Such an inconvenience was not conducive to building up patronage, especially during cold or inclement weather.

Things rolled along rather smoothly on the NY W & B during the first few years of operation, possibly because there were no mad rushes by the scanty populace for its services. A paint shop was erected about a year or so after the line opened to take care of the appearance of the cars. A new innovation on car painting was introduced here when the paint was applied by spray methods instead of brush and the railroad had it down to a science when other systems were still using the older method.

The line piled up an enviable on-time record; the only delays of any consequence were attributable to the opening of the drawbridge on the New Haven tracks over the Bronx River. As an example, during August and September of 1913, over 6,000 trains were operated with 39 delayed from 5 to 15 minutes and one delayed 15 minutes for an all-time record of 99%! Only one of these delays was caused by the failure of equipment. The longest delay was caused by a squirrel which climbed up one of the catenary towers and electrocuted itself and was the cause of a power failure.

On May 2, 1913 the Interstate Commerce Commission held an investigation into the affairs of the New Haven RR in purchasing and building electric railway properties in territories served by it. As regards the NY W & B, the inquiry brought out the following statement from Charles S. Mellen, then president of the New Haven, "I have never been enthusiastic or at all optimistic as to the New York, Westchester & Boston Railway being a good investment in the present or immediate future, but people in whom I have the greatest confidence thought

NEW YORK, WESTCHESTER & BOSTON RY. CO.
C. L. BARDO, Trustee

WEEKLY TICKET (Good only Sunday to Saturday Inclusive of week for which issued)

1 Purchaser whose signature appears below is entitled to **FOURTEEN** continuous rides in either direction. Fares paid in the absence of this ticket will not be refunded. Subject to tariff regulations. *J. P. [Signature]*
Chas. Bard, Trustee

New York Zone and White Plains Zone **11**

Ticket Expires **SATURDAY**

M

MALE						FEMALE							
Form 14 P 1-11						No.							
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14

NEW YORK, WESTCHESTER & BOSTON RY. CO.
SOUTHBOUND
Good for One Continuous Passage
MT. VERNON ZONE
TO
NEW YORK ZONE
If presented within 30 DAYS from and in addition to date stamped on back.
Subject to tariff regulations.

3 **1**

NEW YORK, WESTCHESTER & BOSTON RY. CO.
GOOD ONLY DATE STAMPED HEREON FOR ONE CONTINUOUS PASSAGE
SOUTHBOUND
From STATION STAMPED ON BACK to Chester, Highgate, E. St., Mt. Vernon or Intermediate Stations
This ticket to be dropped in Box at Destination Station
RIDE ONLY Form H-62

9 **12**

G. Coley

From Francis J. Goldsmith (ERA 1209)

it was wise and desirable. I yielded to their judgment. The reason for the purchase was that it was going to be extremely valuable in the future. My hesitation was because of the burden that I felt the New Haven was hardly justified in assuming against the time when the road would become a paying investment. It is one of the finest pieces of railroad in this country. Its operation at present indicates that it is barely earning its operating expenses. The New Haven is carrying the burden of lost interest upon the total investment. I believe that situation is going to improve constantly. The NY W & B was opened too soon in one respect. It was built to connect with the subways in New York. The question is whether the enormous cost of that construction was justified in advance of the business to be done. It should be earning full operating expenses by June 1, (1913) and I think that from that date, it will be able to show a slight profit above expenses. With the completion of the subways in New York, the earnings of the NY W & B are going to be very much larger, but I have no expectation that in the immediate future the road will be able to show earning on its full cost."

One wonders why the planners of the NY W & B adopted full-scale railroad dimensions. The service rendered could have been provided by a line built to less rigid specifications and possibly could be still running today had it adopted a less ambitious right-of-way than the superb million-dollar-to-the-mile roadbed it possessed. About the only explanation possible would be to again bring up the point of the expensive Grand Central Terminal that the New Haven was obliged to use. Along with all the hoopla that the railroad dished up about tremendous capacity potential, one can see that the guiding hand of the New Haven was taking a gamble of popularizing their Harlem River Terminal. Should the populace be educated to using the rapid transit to get to their Manhattan destinations, then the New Haven could quietly move towards the abandonment of the use of Grand Central Terminal entirely and bring all their passenger trains over the NY W & B to the Harlem River and effect a huge savings in terminal facilities. But

the gamble did not pay off at all; the public stayed away from the Harlem River in droves. Those who used the IRT were provided with an extra convenience however when the subway route was opened to East 180th St. right beside the Westchester right-of-way on March 3, 1917, and the long walk was done away with.

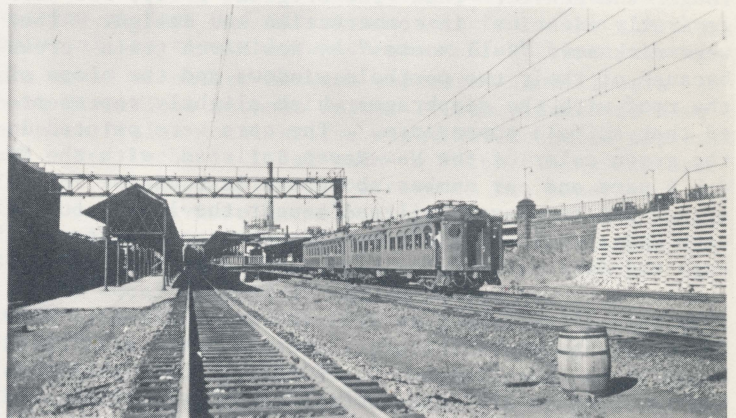
After the first few years of operation, the schedules were adjusted more to the needs of traffic to cut out as much unnecessary car mileage as possible. All night service to White Plains was suspended and the practice of having alternate locals and expresses originate from the two northerly terminals was stopped. Instead, all expresses originated in New Rochelle and all locals in White Plains. With minor adjustments, this practice was retained until the abandonment of service. Again with an eye towards more efficient operation, coasting clocks were installed in the cars in 1915 and competitive power saving records were kept for all motormen. A road instructor was appointed and motormen unlucky or wasteful enough to be on the tail end of the list were reprimanded and given instructions in how to conserve power. Even the current consumed for heat was recorded, so that a 50% power saving record was soon established. The cars were equipped with an automatic overspeed control which limited the speed of trains to 56 mph. Also, an air brake and control interlock feature was installed on all cars.

The railroad was approaching the zenith of its glory and with business picking up, added 15 new cars to the rolling stock. These new cars had some refinements over the old such as lights in the center of the ceilings with opal glass reflectors instead of the unsightly signal cord hanging from straps through the length of the car and then some of the older cars were brought up to date. In addition, five trailer cars were added to the roster, to be hauled by the motor cars in a ratio of four motor cars to one trailer.

The equipment and roadway were kept in excellent repair and no detail was overlooked that might result in increased operating efficiency. When the catenary was



133rd Street Terminal (GAV Photos)



Two car Port Chester train leaving 133rd Street.

erected, steel trolley wire was selected since there was an appreciable savings in cost over that of copper, with the conductivity difference negligible. The tops of the cars were originally painted a dark gray, but were gradually repainted a rust color since friction of the steel contact shoes of the pantographs caused a large amount of steel oxide dust to fall upon the roofs. No trouble was experienced with the steel contact wire but it was found that it did rust badly in the grooves. These shortcomings were considered serious enough so that replacement of all steel contact wire was effected in 1923. The objection was not so much to the presence of the dust on the car roof, but when it rained, this substance was washed down onto the sides of the cars giving even a newly repainted car a drab appearance. The installation of gutters failed to remedy this and no method of cleaning was successful in removing the discoloration. A car fresh from the paint shop could hardly be distinguished at the end of a month from any other on the road. After the replacement of the steel trolley wire with copper, the amount of dust collected on car roofs was reduced considerably and the dark green exterior paint was preserved longer. At the same time, wooden strain insulators were replaced by porcelain insulators to reduce the cost of line department maintenance. Also, screws holding hangers clamped to the contact wire were replaced by bolts and lock washers to reduce the large number of loose hangers in the catenary network found by periodic inspection. It is interesting to note that the inspection of the overhead was done by the foreman who rode the second car of a regular train and observed the action of the pantograph on the first car. This may have seemed a bit crude for a road which prided itself its remarkable operating record, but it must be borne in mind that the frequency of trains prohibited the use of the line car except at night when repairs were made with the current turned off.

Trackwork was accomplished during the day when all trains used the center tracks on the four track mainline and the single car locals stopped at the stations



Waiting for the train to go. Note Motorman enjoying the paper too! (M. Landsman photo from H. Rinke)

at the end of the platforms where stairs led down from the high level platforms to wooden planking placed across the local track. Regular users of the line were not at all surprised to find their train on the wrong track on the double tracked portions of the line and to find locals and expresses using the same track. Some of the practices of the road were indeed unique and may have seemed a bit crude but they worked!

At this point, it might be interesting to recall one of the first "fantrips" on record over an entire electric railway system. Needless to say, the term of "railfan" was unheard of in the year 1915, but nevertheless this trip was instigated by a gentleman who is one of the elder statesmen of railfans. He is Albert H. Bernhard (ERA #605) who, in 1915, was attending the Brooklyn Polytechnic Institute and was very interested in the NY W & B. Mr. Bernhard had the honor to be elected to the post of secretary of the Brooklyn Polytechnic Electrical Engineering Students Association and in this capacity addressed a letter to the Chief Electrical Engineer of the railroad inquiring whether the students would be accorded the privilege of inspecting the system. A very favorable reply was received by Mr. Bernhard and accordingly a school holiday was declared in September of 1915 and the entire student body descended upon the 180th St. station where a five car special awaited them. After a fast trip to New Rochelle, the special returned to Mount Vernon and reversed direction to cover the White Plains branch where a lunch stop was made. Then after a telephone call to the dispatcher, the special proceeded with rights over everything non-stop to 180th St. where the group disbanded except for Mr. Bernhard and a party of the Electrical Engineering students who were further shown over the property by Mr. Ferdinand Zogbaum, the Chief Electrical Engineer of the NY W & B. To Mr. Bernhard, the dismantling of the railroad in 1943 was "sheer vandalism".

Following the first World War, the NY W & B, or the "Metro-urban" as President Miller dubbed it, dug in

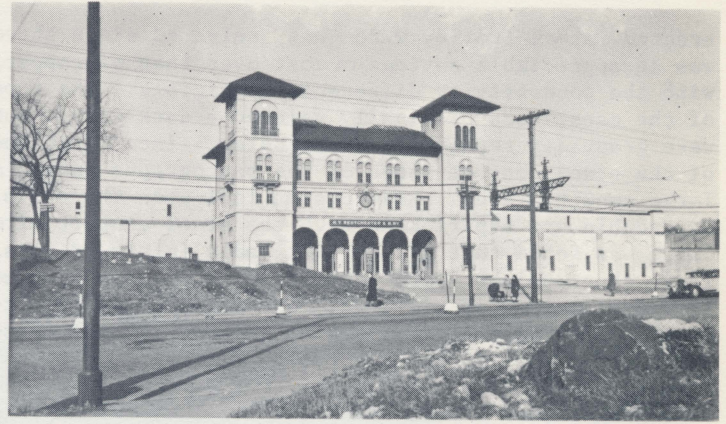


Joining NH tracks at Harlem River, northbound local leaves new Triborough Bridge in background. (Photo by G. A. Votava)

for a court battle with the City of New York to increase the minimum fares to 10¢ a ride. The city, of course, wanted the railroad to live up to its franchise which called for a 5¢ ride within the city limits, but the system needed every bit of revenue for expansion plans, so the city filed suit when the line announced a fare hike. The city lost this preliminary skirmish and the New York State Court of Appeals upheld the NY W & B and the State Public Service Commission in granting the line permission to collect the extra nickel. To the question, "Is the NY W & B Ry. a street railroad within the meaning of Sec. 18 of Art. III of the State Constitution, the court replied in the negative and 10¢ became the minimum fare and the line now put on its long pants as a full-fledged railroad in the eyes of the law.

After the rebuilding of the two combine cars to regular coaches in 1922, ten more cars were added to the roster in 1924. In February 1925, plans were announced for the \$700,000 extension from Larchmont to Mamaroneck without any assistance from the New Haven. President L. S. Miller said, The purposes of the builders of this road are looming towards fulfillment. Month by month the territory we serve is becoming more prosperous and more productive of traffic revenue. In our first full year of operation, we carried 2,800,000 passengers. Last year (1924) we carried over 10 million...We could transport 100 million persons this year without difficulty. The Metro-urban is fast reaching the point where it will cease to be a liability to the New Haven and will become an important asset." Then about six months after this pronouncement, Mr. Miller again had words to say, "...At a cost of over \$25 million, on the mere prospect of business that we would accrue as a result of the development of Westchester County, the Metro-urban is about to appear again in a similar role ...Because trolley routes are fixed and lack the mobility of a bus, the trolley is unsuited to serve the newly developed districts, to aid in the settlement of new suburbs....Therefore application has been made to operate feeder buses in the confines of the towns we serve." A certificate of incorporation was granted from Albany for the County Transportation Company and in April, 1926, a 10 year franchise was granted in a meeting comprised of representatives of the towns involved for the 8 proposed routes of the system. On April 3, 1927, the local lines of the New York & Stamford Ry. were motorized in Port Chester and the remainder of the system was motorized eleven days later. The trolleys had eight zones at 7¢ each from New Rochelle to Stamford and the buses reduced the number of zones to five with a fare of 10¢ per zone. Instead of building the railroad northward from White Plains to Danbury as originally planned with the consolidation of the Westchester Northern Railroad in 1915, which would have effected a freight connection with the Maybrook freight line of the New Haven, President Miller proposed a bus line from White Plains to Brewster, but none of this ever materialized.

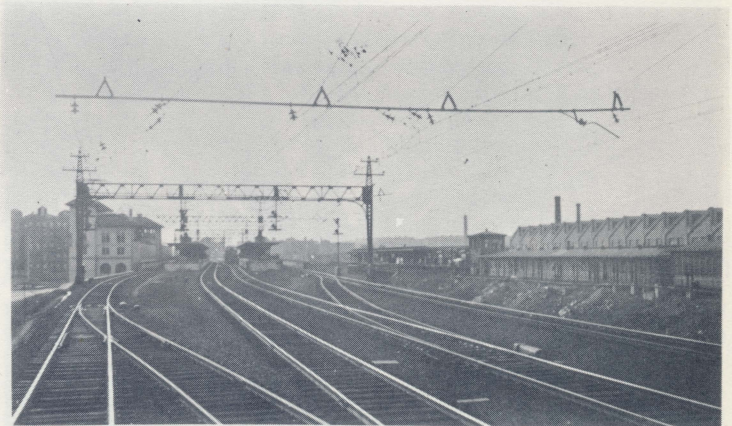
Meanwhile, the NY W & B moved closer to its destination of Port Chester. In 1926, the extension to Mamaroneck was opened and in July of 1927, the road from Mamaroneck to Harrison was completed and 20 more cars were ordered. The following year, the line from Harrison to Rye was completed and the five trailers were given motors, as their use as trailers proved to be too restrictive. Finally the gap from Rye to Port



The main office of the railroad was at E. 180th St. station. (Photo by George E. Votava)

Chester was closed in December, 1929. Twenty additional trains appeared in the timetables, all rush hour expresses, some even skipping certain express stations. Between New Rochelle and Port Chester the line shared the right-of-way with the New Haven main line and, with NY W & B on the west side of the right-of-way, the New Haven stations were moved slightly westward and wooden platforms were erected to handle the Westchester passengers.

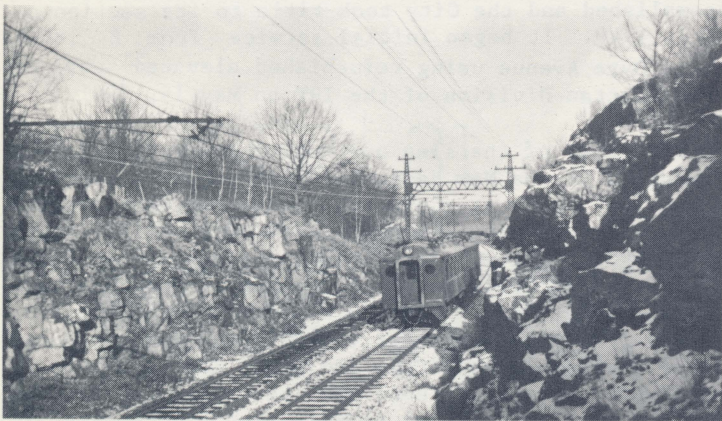
With the nation then on the downward plunge into the depths of a depression, the NY W & B began to feel the pinch of passenger decline. To hold on to them, the road lowered its fares to little more than 1¢ per mile which were then the lowest in the country. The problem however lay however in its weakest link which was lack of a direct New York City connection. This was recognized in 1926 by Westchester County officials. They could see that the Harlem River Terminal was a dismal failure so the Westchester County Transit Commission appointed one of its members, Henry M. Brinckhoff, to look into the matter. The railroad proposed a subway under the Harlem River and 125th St., Manhat-



Looking south at E. 180th St. station. The IRT subway station at right. (Photo by Herman Rinke ERA H426)

tan to distribute passengers to the north-south rapid transit lines, but this plan was not satisfactory to him and instead he urged study of the plan then being put forth by several New Jersey railroads for a loop line under Manhattan. If the NY W & B and the several New Jersey roads could work together to build a loop through Manhattan, it would eliminate duplication and result in greater economy of operation. None of these ideas ever bore fruit and with the depression lingering on, the line plodded on through the middle thirties, its future looking darker every month.

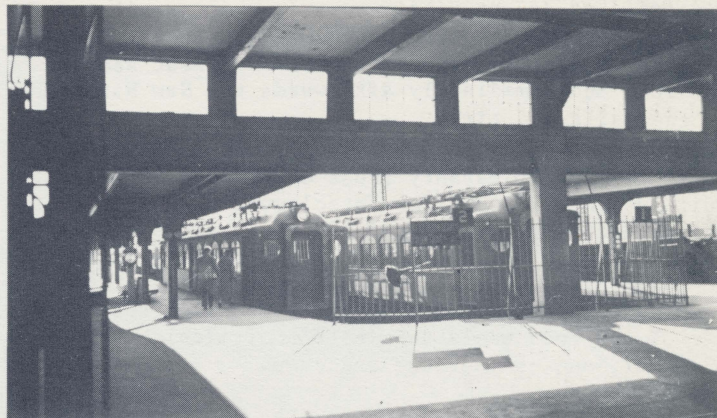
The New Haven was experiencing its own woes and was not happy to have the Westchester hanging on to its purse strings. Under the reorganization of the New Haven, it was planned to liquidate its holdings and attempt to recover some of the millions that it had poured into the line in the years passed. Realizing that its gamble on the Harlem River Terminal was lost, the New Haven tried to prevent the entire investment from being lost by proposing that the NY W & B run over the New Haven tracks into Grand Central, but this was blocked by the Public Service Commission. Several plans were advanced for bringing the line into Manhattan, all the way from building a subway under Madison



Car 101 northbound to White Plains passes through a rock cut near Wykagyl. (Photo by George E. Votava)

Avenue to running them over the structures of the Second Avenue elevated line. They were both turned down since little capital was around to build a subway and New York's fiery Mayor La Guardia wanted to remove the elevated lines.

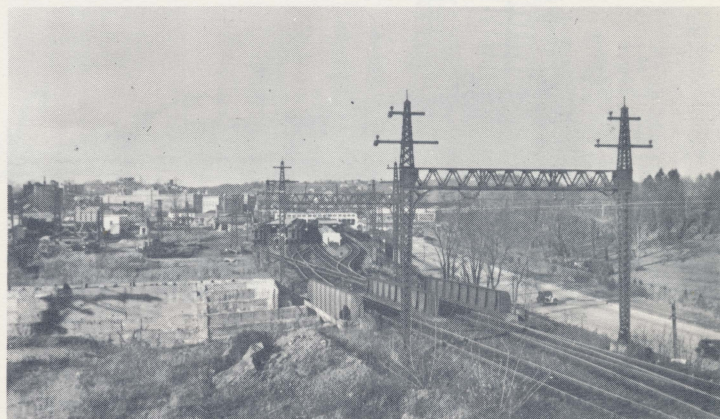
In November 1935, the NY W & B went into receivership and rumors appeared which surmised that the New Haven had been "milking" the railroad. These were exploded by the Trustee C. L. Bardo, who obtained court permission to hire Coverdale & Colpitts, engineering consultants to make a study of the relationship between the two roads. They reported that the annual rental of track and stations between West Farms and the Harlem River while apparently high, was actually a reasonable figure in view of the fact that the road at this point traversed very valuable land and used the best equipment obtainable. Then the New Haven pointed out that rentals had been reduced considerably when the NY W & B revenues dropped and even this rental, along with pow-



Train time at White Plains.(G.E.V.)

er bills had not been paid for more than two years prior to the investigation in 1936. Since 1929, the Westchester had been losing between 2 and 3 million dollars annually, with the New Haven continuing to guarantee the road's outstanding bonds. For 25 years, the road operated with never a profit but the towns that it served experienced one of the biggest real estate booms in the nation. Much of the home development was based on the premise that the Westchester would always be there to serve them somehow. What bit of freight the railroad handled never amounted to much but firms like Anheuser-Busch, Lock Joint Pipe, Golden Bro. Scarsdale Supply Co. and a few others, notably coal distributing firms benefitted by the service that the line offered.

In July 1937, the New Haven, owners of 99% of the NY W & B stock, entered a petition in Federal Court to reorganize in bankruptcy. Shortly thereafter, a similar petition was filed for the Westchester, since it owed long overdue rent on portions of track, cars and power bills. The judge decided that reorganization of the NY W & B was virtually impossible. The bond holders sued for an equity receivership and after appointment of receivers, the New Haven filed suit to compel them to pay outstanding bills or to be dispossessed. The only possible way out was to abandon a portion of the



Altman's Department Store occupies the site of the White Plains Terminal today (George V. Arnoux photo)

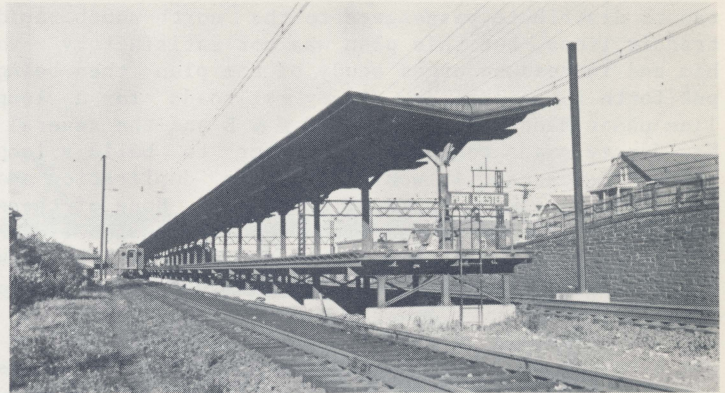
line and the section from New Rochelle to Port Chester was selected as the victim, as it was paralleled for the most part by the New Haven. On October 31, 1937, the last train operated over this newest section of the road and immediately afterwards the New Haven tore up the rails and ties.

Meanwhile, the Guaranty Trust Co. of New York brought suit in Federal Court for foreclosure under the first mortgage covering assets of the line. Judge Knox found the line to be insolvent and so ordered all operations to cease by January 1, 1938. Accordingly, notices appeared in the stations that operations for the remainder of the road would terminate as of midnight December 31, 1937, and at last the end came.

When the notices were posted in the stations announcing the ending of service, its faithful commuters were hardly able to believe their eyes. Certainly something could be done to continue the excellent service rendered by the line. Regular riders had become used to the idea of changing to the IRT at E. 180th Street to reach their Manhattan destinations, but the answer was simple - there just wasn't enough of them to support the railroad. Too many others had deserted to the New Haven or to their automobiles and the notices meant just what they said. An advertisement asked "Where are you going on New Years Eve?". Someone wryly scribbled in reply, "The W & B to oblivion".

Several attempts were made to get the road back into operation and many schemes were proposed, including the creation of an Authority to run the line. Meanwhile, the New Haven Railroad stepped in and seized 50 of the passenger cars from those that were lined up along the right-of-way south of E. 180th St. along with the locomotive as its claim on unpaid bills. They were taken to the New Haven's Van Nest Shops where their electrical equipment and pantographs were removed and subsequently the cars were taken to the Readville shop in Massachusetts where they were rebuilt for commutation service in the Boston suburban area.

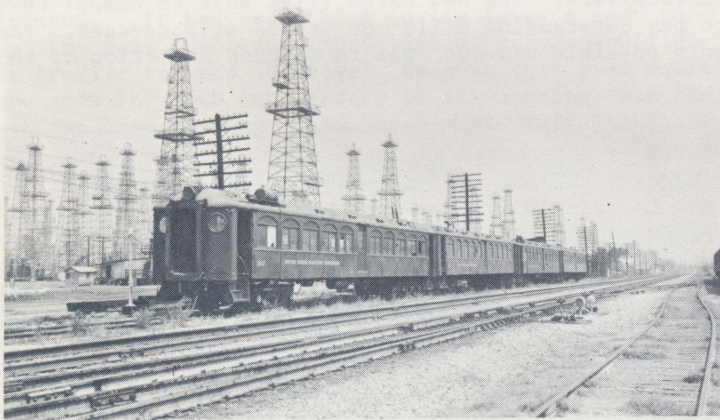
Judge Knox, after hearing various plans to get the line in operation decided that none of them could show that



The Port Chester terminal, NH tracks on right (GEV)

the road would be able to support itself and accordingly on January 5, 1940, ordered that the road be fully dismantled unless some proposal was forthcoming that should at least be a self-supporting operation. The City of New York offered to buy the section of the line within its limits after agitation by Bronx civic groups pointed out that it would be much cheaper to tie the line in with the IRT than to build an extension of the IND-Concourse subway line across the Bronx to tap in roughly the same area around Gun Hill Road. This was accomplished and the City took title to its section on May 1, 1940. It began initial service from E. 180th St. to Dyre Avenue using refurbished elevated cars of the Manhattan Division of the IRT on May 15, 1941.

The remainder of the line north of the city limits was dismantled by the New Haven Railroad using a temporary connecting track at Columbus Avenue between the two lines. The remaining passenger cars were hauled to the New York Central yards at Port Morris for sale. These cars were eventually purchased by the US Maritime Service and were used in hauling war workers to shipyards in Texas and other parts of the US. Some became homes easing the housing shortage and ended up in scrap heaps while others lie here and there just rusting far from the road they served so well. The right-of-way is gradually disappearing too with the passage of time as it is being removed to make way for new apartment houses or converted to highway usage.



US Maritime Commission cars at Santa Fe Springs, Cal. in July, 1947. (Collection of George E. Votava.)



Looking south from Gedney Way station in 1944. (Collection of Marvin Landsman, ERA 669)