

HEADLIGHTS



Headlights

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July-December 2005

Rails to Rubber to Rails Again

By Edward Ridolph. The street railway industry in the U.S. and Canada entered a precipitous 30-year decline after World War II. Under the banner of "light rail," the industry was reborn in the early 1980s, a renaissance which continues to this day. Part two of Mr. Ridolph's exhaustive 60-year retrospective looks at U.S. systems from Nebraska to Pennsylvania.

To the right, Liberty Valley Transit's famed 1030 "Liberty Bell Limited" travels along the side of U.S. Highway 202 in true interurban fashion between Allentown and the Philadelphia suburb of Norristown in the late 1940s. Allentown, Pa.'s summary begins on page 54. JOHN STERN PHOTO

On the cover, Pittsburgh Railway Company PCC 1483 on the 98-Glassport line passes McKeesport B&O station in May 1961. The Pittsburgh, Pa. summary begins on page 66. RAY BERGER PHOTO





Part 2:

Nebraska— Pennsylvania



Nebraska

Lincoln

LINCOLN CITY LINES, the successor to the LINCOLN TRACTION CO., was the final streetcar operator in the Nebraska capital. The LTC once operated 87 cars over 60 miles of track, but most of the system had been replaced by buses before 1942, when the LCL, a National City Lines property, took over the operation. Only two streetcar lines, Route 14/College View and Route 15/Randolph, and 12 miles of track served by 10 single-truck Birneys and four double-truck cars, remained in operation during WWII. The LCL had the dubious distinction of being the second postwar abandonment, vanishing just two weeks after



Birneys, Gold's and 5¢ Burgers
SPRAGUE LIBRARY
COLLECTION

Car 308 (American, 1919) on the Randolph St. route, above, is on N Street at 11th, downtown on August 22, 1940. Randolph St. was one of the last two car lines. Roster mate 307 (right) is taking layover in downtown on August 10, 1936.



Salt Lake City and one day after the ODT officially lifted its wartime restrictions on streetcar abandonment. The end came with appropriate ceremony featuring the last two cars to run in the city and a host of dignitaries.

September 1, 1945: Last day of streetcar operation.

Omaha

OMAHA & COUNCIL BLUFFS STREET RAILWAY operated a large network of city and suburban lines in two states, Nebraska and Iowa, with some 500 cars and nearly 200 miles of track in service. Experimental electric cars appeared in Omaha in 1887, and in Council Bluffs, Iowa, the following year. Cable cars also ran in Omaha from 1887 to 1895. The O&CB began running buses in 1925, but the rail to bus conversions moved at a slow pace until 1947, when abandonments increased. On Sept. 15, 1948, service on the four local lines in Council Bluffs was abandoned. This was followed on Sept. 25 by the abandonment of the interstate line between Omaha and Council Bluffs after a bitter franchise dispute with the Iowa city. By 1950 only six rail lines remained, three of which were abandoned in 1951 and another in 1953, leaving only the Dundee/10th & Harney and North 45th/6th & Center as streetcar lines for another two years. An official ceremonial last trip with car 1011 was run the day after regular streetcar service ended.

March 4, 1955: Car 1017 closed out regular streetcar service in Omaha on the Dundee line.





Downtown Omaha Scenes

SPRAGUE LIBRARY COLLECTION

Car 1017 (left, second from bottom), which would ultimately operate the very last trip in 1955, is southbound on the 10th Street Bridge passing the still extant Union Station on the way to the 13th & Deer Park terminus on May 9, 1938.

Deck roof cars 972 and 928 (bottom left) show off their pristine backsides from a recent rebuild at the company's shops, located at 26th & Lake, on March 20, 1943. Except for the Council Bluffs routes, O&CB was a single ended system.

O&CB 913 (above) traverses the heart of downtown, stopping at 15th & Douglas southbound on the South Omaha line on March 20, 1943. The building dominating the background is Union Pacific's headquarters.

Car 1030 (right) bound for Benson is northbound on 16th at Dodge on a snowy March 20, 1943. 1021 (lower right) is westbound on Farnam on the Dundee route (one of the last two lines to operate) in July 1935. The white stripe denotes a front entrance car.





Council Bluffs, Iowa Scenes

(Above) Birney 1551 is on the 29th Avenue line in 1940. The Council Bluffs “dinky” routes served a small city world in sharp contrast to the Omaha side of the system.

(Right) Tying the two systems together was the Omaha-Council Bluffs “Bridge Line.” Car 818 has gone around the downtown Council Bluffs loop and is ready to proceed west on Broadway on March 13, 1943.



New Jersey

Atlantic City

ATLANTIC CITY & SHORE, popularly known as the SHORE FAST LINE, opened in 1906, eventually operating a 16-mile interurban line between Atlantic City and Ocean City. The AC&S had a complex corporate structure, was a distant subsidiary of the Pennsylvania RR, and four miles of the line ran over third rail track of the PRR. The AC&S went into business with 20 interurban cars, which served the line until final abandonment. In 1946 the line was sold to the ATLANTIC CITY TRANSPORTATION COMPANY. In September 1946, service beyond Somers Point ended when a fire destroyed the trestle into Ocean City, and less than two years later all service on the truncated line was replaced by buses.

January 18, 1948: Last interurban cars ran between Atlantic City and Somers Point.

ATLANTIC CITY TRANSPORTATION COMPANY, organized on Dec. 1, 1945, bought the city and interurban operations of the ATLANTIC CITY & SHORE. The city division, which had first seen electric cars in 1893, consisted of a single line along Atlantic Ave. from the Inlet to Longport. The line was owned by the West Jersey & Seashore RR, a Pennsylvania RR subsidiary, and freight trains once used the Atlantic Ave. tracks. In 1940 the AC&S bought 25 Brilliners to modernize the line, supplemented by a fleet of older cars. In 1954 the line was cut back from Longport to Douglas Ave., and converted entirely to bus the following year. A 20-car parade closed out streetcar service following the last scheduled run.

December 28, 1955: Brilliner 207 was the last regularly scheduled car on Atlantic Avenue.

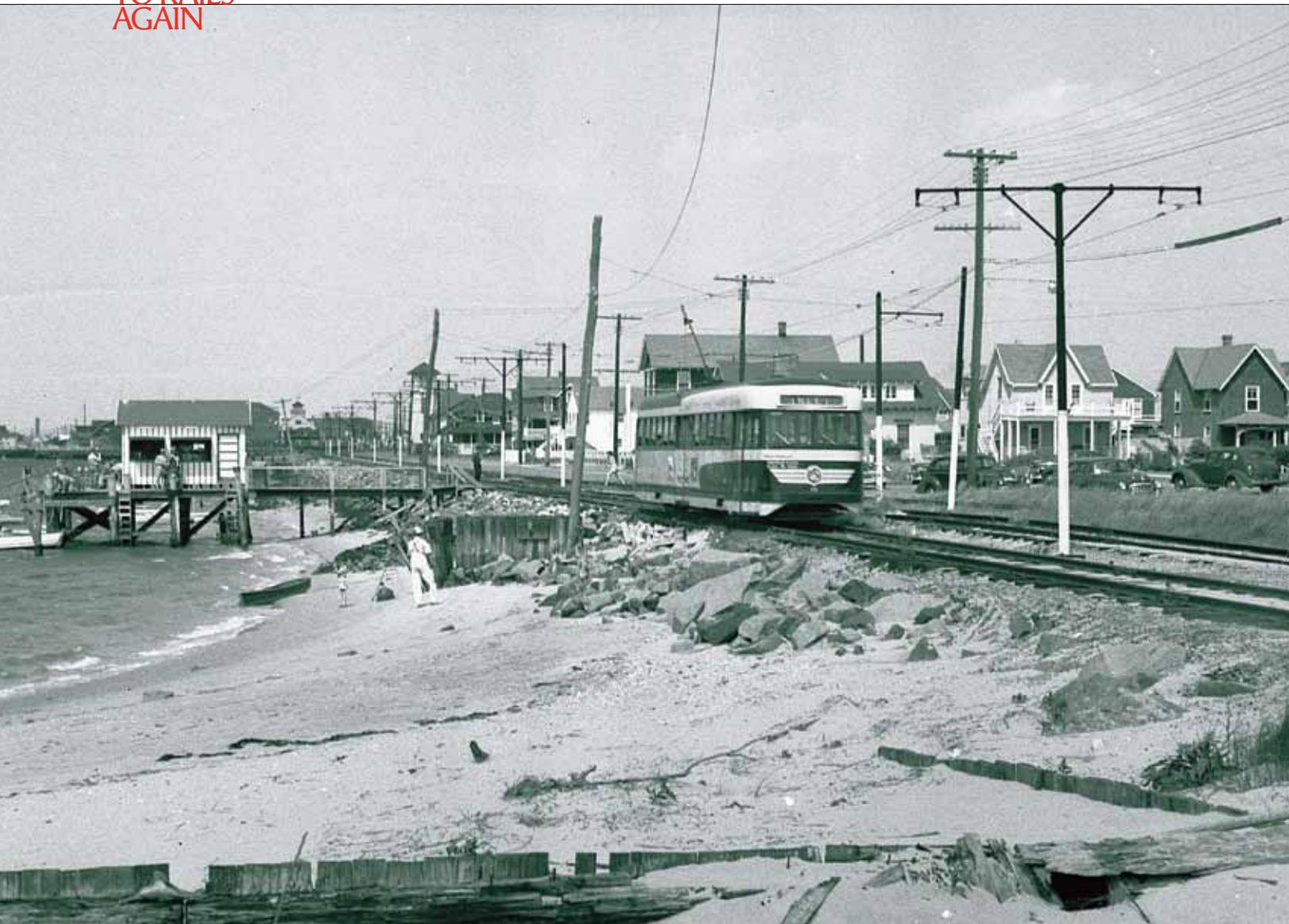
Atlantic Avenue and Longport Division

JOHN STERN PHOTOS

Brilliner 217 (top right) has just turned off of Atlantic Avenue and heads north-easterly on private right-of-way near Bader Avenue. Hog Island 6848 (bottom right), a former

Ocean Electric car from New York, navigates through Longport near the outer end of the line about 1950, when less dense development prevailed.





(Above) The southwest end of the line at Longport is illustrated here. In addition to a reversing loop, it also contained a passing siding (shown behind Brilliner 220) and a two-block-long storage track. 220 is beginning its trip around the loop in preparation for its nearly eight mile (and 44 minute) trip back to the Inlet.

(Right) Hog Island cars 245 and 6889 repose on the car house lead next to the Inlet loop. 245 has received a new number as a result of the corporate change-over from the Pennsylvania Railroad to the new Atlantic City Transportation Co. The new (and ultimately experimental) paint scheme was probably necessitated by the termination of an all-over advertising paint job.



Hudson County

New Operations

NEW JERSEY TRANSIT, which also operates the Rt. 7/City Subway light rail line in Newark, began service on the Hudson-Bergen Light Rail Line in 2000, the first new LRV line in New Jersey in many years. Running primarily on



Car 216 shows off its art deco styling as it waits for time at the Inlet terminal in 1950.



private right-of-way, with some street running in Jersey City, and also utilizing abandoned railroad right-of-way or the bed of the Morris Canal, the HBLR line features three overlapping routes between North Bergen and Bayonne. The line also reaches Hoboken Terminal, and includes a branch on former CNJ right-of-way to West Side Avenue. Service is provided by 52 Kinki-Sharyo LRVs. Extensions to the original line opened between 2003 and 2006, and a further extension to 8th St. in Bayonne is under construction.

April 15, 2000: First day of operation on the Hudson-Bergen Light Rail Line.

HBLR

TREVOR LOGAN

Hudson-Bergen Light Rail 2047 is part of the second order of 25 cars for expansion built in 2004–2005. It is seen here in Hoboken Terminal waiting to depart on a twilight run to 22nd Street Bayonne on March 20, 2008.

Newark and Jersey City

NEW JERSEY TRANSIT assumed operation of TRANSPORT OF NEW JERSEY in 1980, and currently operates light rail lines in Newark and Hudson County. In 1971 PUBLIC SERVICE COORDINATED TRANSPORT, once the largest streetcar operator in the state, changed its name to TRANSPORT OF NEW JERSEY. In 1907 the PUBLIC SERVICE RAILWAY was formed, eventually operating some 2400 cars over 850 miles of local and interurban track in five divisions in central and northern New Jersey. The name was changed to PSCT in 1928, the same year a massive rail to bus conversion program began. By 1938 only eight

car lines were left, four in Hoboken utilizing the famous Palisades trestle that had been cable operated from 1886 to 1892, and four in Newark. The Hoboken lines were gone by 1949, and three of the Newark lines were out by 1952, leaving only Rt. 7, which operated in the subway which opened in 1935, to carry on. In 1954 Rt. 7 was modernized with 30 PCC cars from Minneapolis. The PCCs operated on Rt. 7 until 2001, when they were replaced with new LRV cars. In 2002 Rt. 7 was extended one mile to Grove Street. In 2000 NJT opened its new Hudson-Bergen light rail line, also equipped with LRV cars.



When the Streetcar Was Still King in Northern New Jersey

SPRAGUE LIBRARY COLLECTION

Standard deck roof car 2749 (above left) descends the Palisades Elevated near Observer Highway and Hope Street in Hoboken in

the late 1940s, near the end of service. 2613 is inbound on the 29-Bloomfield line (upper right) at Bloomfield

& Sinclair in Montclair on March 21, 1952. 2804 is northbound on Palisade Avenue (lower right) just north of 7th Street in Union City on August 5, 1949.

The apartment building is still in use and the area is not far from Hudson-Bergen's 9th St./Congress Station in Hoboken.



Newark Tunnel Portals, 1937 and Today

SPRAGUE LIBRARY (ABOVE) AND TREVOR LOGAN (LEFT) PHOTOS

(Above) 2213 on the 27-Mt. Prospect route exits from the Cedar Street subway at Washington Street in 1937. The portal is extant in 2009.

(Left) By mid-2000 a new tunnel portal was constructed. This one at the end of the Mulberry Street subway, built for the extension of the Newark

City Subway to Broad Street Station on the Morris & Essex commuter rail line, opened on July 17, 2006. LRV 106 of the City Subway fleet of 21 Kinkisharyo cars exits outbound near NJPAC/Center Street station on January 3, 2009.

Wildwood

FIVE-MILE BEACH ELECTRIC RAILWAY was one of the smallest street railways in the state, operating a single five-mile line from North Wildwood to Wildwood Crest, with a fleet of 22 open and closed cars. Busiest in the summer when tourist traffic peaked in this ocean resort, only two cars were necessary to hold down winter schedules. The line opened in 1903 and ended operations at the close of the 1945 summer season, one of the earliest lines abandoned in the post war era.

September 4, 1945: Last day of streetcar operation.



New York

Albany

UNITED TRACTION COMPANY operated streetcars in the state capital for nearly 50 years. The UTC was the 1899 successor to the ALBANY RAILWAY, which began service in 1892, two years after electric cars began running in Albany. The UTC eventually operated 24 local streetcar lines in Albany, Troy and Cohoes, as well as interurban lines throughout the region.



At one time the company had nearly 500 cars in service over 112 miles of track. The first rail to bus conversion occurred in 1924, and by 1941 most of the system was gone. Only five local streetcar lines in Albany remained to carry on through the war years. On August 10, 1946, routes 2, 4, 5 and 6 were abandoned en masse, and three weeks later the last cars ran on the Belt Line.

August 31, 1946: Car 834 made the last streetcar run in Albany on Route 3/Belt Line.

Albany's United Traction Company 822, above, looks newer than its 1913 construction date thanks in part to a modernization in 1929.

Five Mile Beach Electric Railway

FRANK MIKLOS COLLECTION

Car 36's two man crew, top left, enjoys a moment for the camera. The destination ("Crest" for Wildwood Crest in this case, the south end of the line) was painted on the cars. Car 25, bottom left, is a former

open bench car that was partially enclosed in the early 1940s so it can be operated with just a motorman who also collects fares. It started life on the Third Avenue Railway system in NYC.

Buffalo

INTERNATIONAL RAILWAY COMPANY was formed in 1902 as a consolidation of 13 street railways in the Buffalo area. The IRC operated 27 local routes in Buffalo, other local lines in Lockport and Niagara Falls, and interurban lines throughout the area. With more than 900 cars in service over more than 400 miles of track, the IRC was one of the largest street railways in the state. Conversion from rail to bus began in earnest in the early 1930s, and by 1941 the only remaining streetcar operations were in the city of Buffalo, where 13 local lines were still in service. The IRC went into receivership in 1947, and by May 1950, when the NIAGARA FRONTIER TRANSIT SYSTEM took over the system, only six streetcar lines were left. The new company lost no time in converting the remaining lines to bus. Three lines went out on June 19, 1950, and less than two weeks later the last three lines, Fillmore, Genesee and Broadway, were abandoned following a civic ceremony. In 1984 rail service returned to Buffalo when one of the nation's earliest light rail lines went into operation.

July 1, 1950: Last day of NFTA streetcar service in Buffalo.



Buffalo in Streetcar Days

JOHN STERN PHOTOS

(Above) Nearside 6129 is outbound from downtown on Clinton Street east of Michigan Avenue prior to line 2-Clinton's demise in early 1948.

(Left) A classic Peter Witt is northbound on the 23-Fillmore crosstown route on East Parade next to Humboldt Park in this prosaic scene from 1948.

(Next page) The 9-Parkside route featured extensive private right-of-way around and near Delaware Park, including this underpass at the Erie Railroad following the alignment of Virgil Avenue. Here, one of 130 Peter Witts that International Railways eventually owned, is inbound heading for Main Street and a long trek to downtown and the DL&W Station in 1948.

RAILS
TO RUBBER
TO RAILS
AGAIN









Downtown Buffalo, Then and Now

JOHN STERN (LEFT) AND TREVOR LOGAN (RIGHT) PHOTOS

(Left) Postwar Buffalo was the land of Peter Witts and Mack buses, both of which are seen here at Main & Court Streets looking west toward City Hall. This same corner now hosts the Main Street Light Rail.

(Right) Two blocks further south at Church St. a contemporary scene sees a southbound three car train of Tokyu cars heading for Erie Canal Harbor Station on January 7, 2009.



New Operations

Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority (NFTA) operates BUFFALO METRO RAIL, a single, 6.6-mile line, primarily along or under Main St., using 27 Tokyu LRVs.

Most of the line, the only light rail line in New York State, is in subway, and just over a mile is surface track in a pedestrian mall. The surface section opened in 1984, followed by the remainder of the line, in the subway, on May 20, 1985. Although 12 PCC cars were bought from Cleveland for service on a possible extension to Tonawanda, this never came about and the cars were eventually scrapped. There are currently no plans to extend the line as Buffalo's population, and the downtown retail center, continues to decline.

October 10, 1984: Regular service begins on the 1.2-mile surface section of the BMR.

Jamestown

JAMESTOWN, WESTFIELD & NORTHWESTERN had its origins in an 1887 steam railroad which ran between Jamestown, Mayville and Westfield. The JW&NW was incorporated in 1913, and the following year the 35-mile main line was electrified. Freight traffic was always the mainstay of the operation, but the five car passenger fleet continued to offer a limited service between its namesake cities until after WWII, in the process becoming New York's last passenger interurban.

November 30, 1947: Last day of passenger service as 302 makes the final interurban run.

New York City

THIRD AVENUE RAILWAY SYSTEM, chartered in 1853, operated a wide ranging city and suburban network that reached from midtown Manhattan north through the Bronx to Yonkers and into Westchester County, once served by 1,500 cars over 400 miles of track. Cable cars were in service from 1885 to 1899, but by 1899 TARS was firmly committed to electric traction.

The first rail to bus conversions took place in New Rochelle in 1924. Still, TARS was committed to retaining rail service on much of the system, and eventually embarked on a program that saw the purchase of second hand cars from other properties as well as the building of several hundred cars in the company shops. However, TARS was caught up in the same anti-streetcar hysteria that doomed all New York City traction, and was forced into a streetcar-to-bus conversion program in order to retain many of its



TARS

RAY BERGER COLLECTION

(Left) Car 104 departs the terminal at Park Row & Ann Street on the T-Third & Amsterdam Aves. Line. This was the southernmost point on the TARS system. The car is starting its trek to 193rd & Amsterdam Avenue in the Fort George section of northern Manhattan. This line was converted on May 28, 1947.

(Right) Car 381 is a fantrip car on the B-Boston Road-Morris Park Avenue line in the Bronx, pictured on Third Avenue at E. 136th Street. Line B lasted until August 22, 1948.



franchises. Even the word “Railway” in the corporate title was dropped about 1943, replaced by “Transit.”

TARS had 38 rail lines in operation during WWII, but ended all streetcar operation in Manhattan on June 29, 1947. The last five Bronx streetcar lines were abandoned on August 21, 1948, leaving only nine lines operating in Yonkers and two lines operating in Mt. Vernon and New

Rochelle. These two were converted to bus in December 1950. Four of the Yonkers lines were converted in October 1952, and four more went out on November 1, leaving only a single line, Rt. 7/Yonkers Ave., to carry the TARS banner for one more week.

November 8, 1952: Last day of TARS streetcar service in Yonkers.



NEW YORK CITY TRANSIT AUTHORITY succeeded the BROOKLYN-QUEENS TRANSIT in 1940. The BQT, with 49 streetcar lines, had followed the BROOKLYN-MANHATTAN TRANSIT and the earlier BROOKLYN RAPID TRANSIT. Electric cars first ran in Brooklyn in 1890, and cable cars from 1887 to 1909. The BRT soon became one of the largest streetcar systems in the U.S., with more than 2000 cars and over 300 miles of track in service. By the 1930s however, intense pressure from the vehemently anti-streetcar administration of Mayor LaGuardia forced a streetcar to bus conversion program on the company. Even the 1936 purchase of 100 PCC cars had little effect on the outcome, and the city takeover of the BQT in 1940 led to wholesale abandonment of the rail system, delayed only by WWII. Conversions resumed after the war, with the bulk of the system abandoned in 1949 and 1950, and by 1951 only three streetcar lines remained in service. The PCC fleet was fully amortized in 1956, and final abandonment of the last two lines, Church and McDonald, soon followed.

October 31, 1956: Last day of Brooklyn streetcar operation by the NYCTA.

A Sampler of Brooklyn & Queens Transit

GEORGE CONRAD COLLECTION

(Top left) A PCC is seen on the Manhattan side of the Brooklyn Bridge bound for such faraway destinations as Coney Island. It is operating in the middle portion of the bridge on the right-of-way formerly occupied by Brooklyn elevated trains until they were cut back from the bridge in 1943.

camera, would be as close as Manhattan would ever get to this modern equipment. The terminal and operation on the bridge ended on March 5, 1950.

(Right) B&QT 6067 was part of a fleet of 200 modern, Peter Witt-style cars built in 1931-32 and formed the primary fleet of the heavy Flatbush line. It is seen here negotiating the big circle at Grand Army Plaza bound for Brooklyn's Flatbush district.

(Bottom) The new Park Row terminal in Manhattan was built to accommodate the conversion to streetcars, opening in 1944. This lineup of PCCs, with 1053 nearest to the





