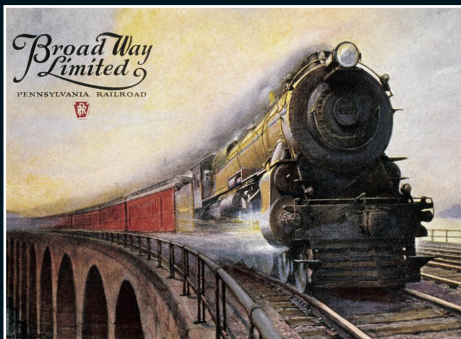
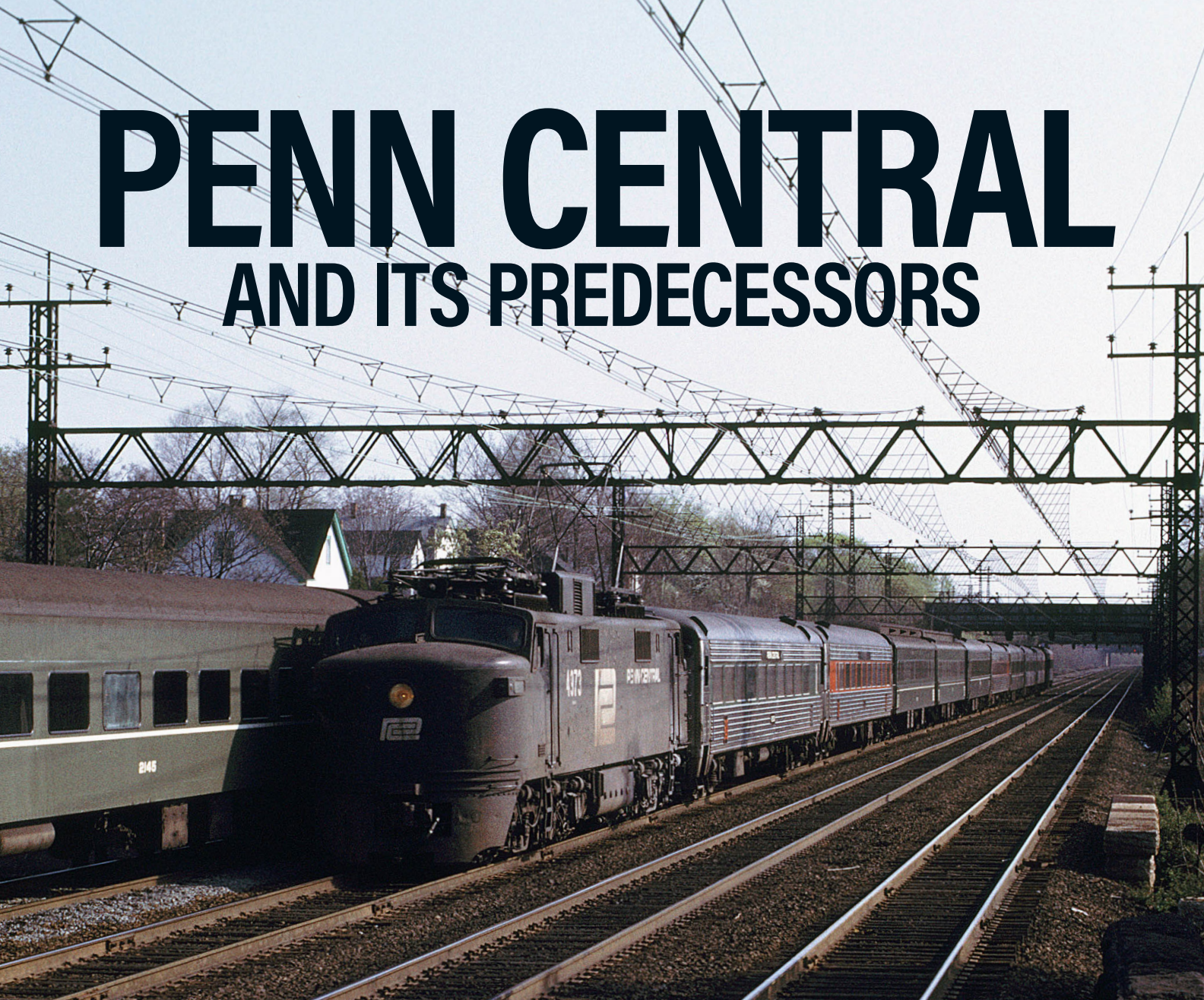


PENN CENTRAL AND ITS PREDECESSORS



Stories about PRR, NYC, NH, and PC

Classic Trains
MAGAZINE



100
YEARS
3 Great
Trains

The Broadway's

After decades as second-fiddle to the *20th Century*, Pennsy's top train hit it big in the post-World War II era

By Joe Welsh

HAD IT OPERATED in any other railroad market, it would have been the unquestioned leader. But between New York and Chicago the Pennsylvania Railroad's *Broadway Limited* lived most of its life in the shadow of New York Central's *20th Century Limited*. That is, until the 1950's, when the *Broadway* began to outdraw the *Century*, and a fateful day in April 1958 when the NYC threw in the towel, consolidating the all-first-class *Century* with a lesser run-



FRANK TATNALL

best years

ning mate. Finally, it was the *Broadway's* turn to shine.

The *Broadway* and the *Century* shared remarkably similar fates, largely a byproduct of the cut-throat competition which characterized their relationship. Introduced on the same day—June 15, 1902—as fast, all-Pullman trains, both flyers were re-equipped at regular intervals. (PRR trains 28 and 29 debuted on that 1902 date as the *Pennsylvania Special*, were suspended from February 1903 until June

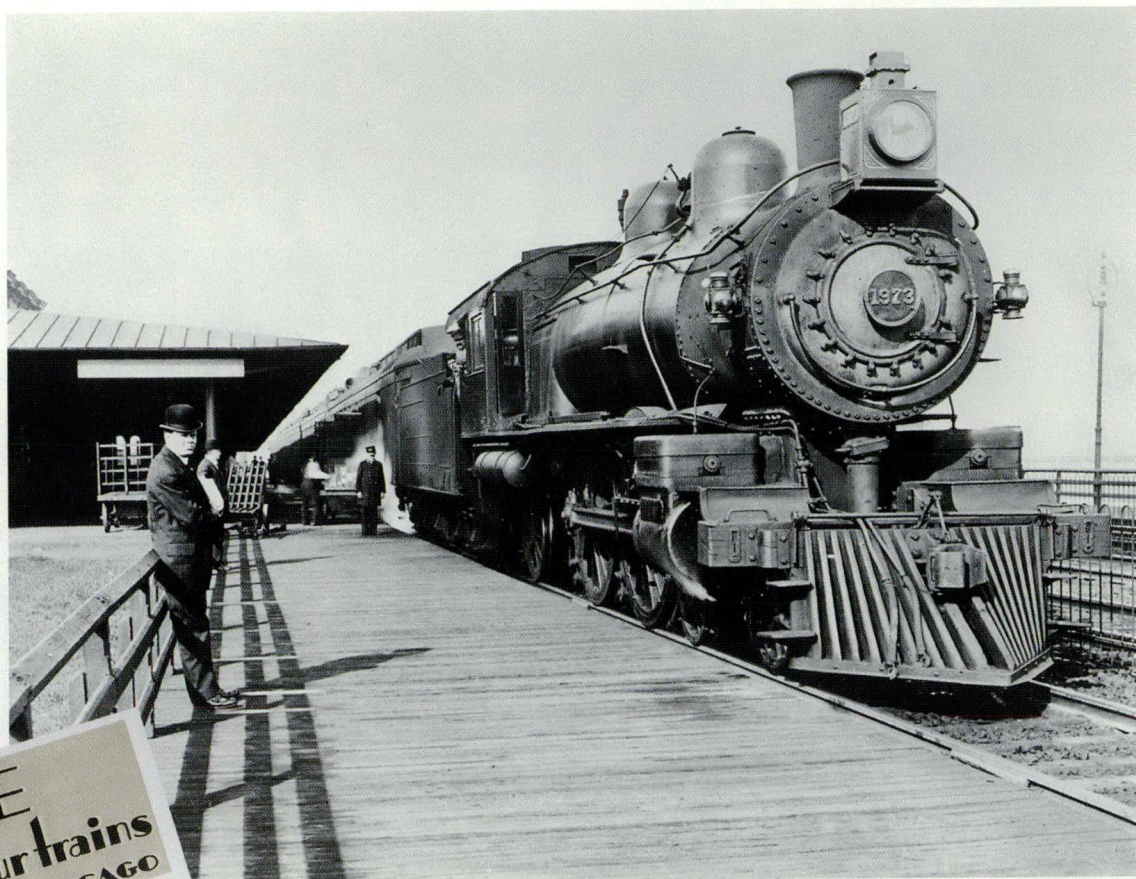
1905, and were renamed *Broadway Limited* in 1912.) When one's schedule was shortened, the other's also would be. But while the *Broadway* struggled, even in the flush times of the 1920's, the *Century* was building a reputation as one of the most successful passenger trains in the world. Between 1918 and 1930, the *Century* amassed more prestige and earnings than any other passenger train in history.

To combat the influence of the *Century*, which boasted a 20-

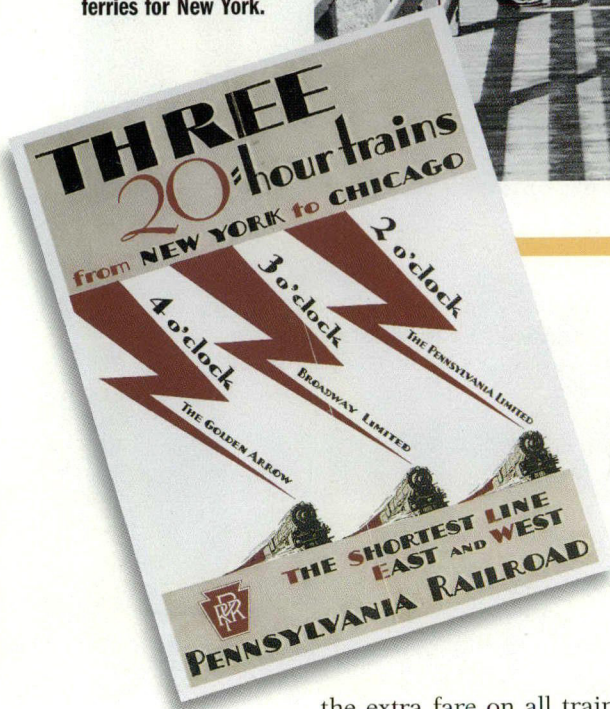
hour schedule, Pennsy established a fleet of three 20-hour trains (including the *Broadway*) in the New York-Chicago market in September 1929. Central followed suit, but the skirmish was soon overshadowed by the impacts of the Depression, which made extra-fare trains difficult to fill. In 1932, Central and Pennsy (now cooperating to reduce unnecessary competition in tough times) jointly reduced their average speeds to yield 21- to 24-hour schedules, and eliminated

At Haverford, 9 miles west of Philadelphia on the Main Line, GG1 4908 rolls the New York-bound *Broadway Limited* past an M.U. commuter train on August 28, 1961.

PRR train 28 stands at North Philadelphia in 1908, when it was still called the *Pennsylvania Special*. Ahead for E2 Atlantic 1973: a fast run up to Jersey City, where passengers boarded ferries for New York.



CLASSIC TRAINS COLLECTION



the extra fare on all trains . . . with the exceptions, of course, of the 18-hour *Broadway* and *Century*. The two flagships each carried a \$10 "service charge," the term "extra fare" being eliminated from the vocabulary as penny-wise practicality replaced the excesses of the 1920's.

In the difficult times of the Depression, the few who had the money to pay a service charge gave their business almost exclusively to the *Century*, and the *Broadway* withered. From 1932 to '36, the *Broadway's* revenue per train-mile dropped from an al-

ready depressing \$1.29 to \$1.10.

In April 1937, however, PRR struck back, with its most effective step yet to combat the influence of the *Century*, introducing the *General*—a no-extra-fare, coach-and-Pullman New York-Chicago train on a competitive 17-hour, 10-minute schedule. In the words of railroad executive and theorist John W. Barriger III, who tracked the change, "The effect of the 'General' was electric. It instantly gained high prestige and popularity which dug deeply into competitive patronage. . . . The 17 hour, 10 minute trains reduced the patronage of the 'Century' and 'Broadway' [now both 16-hour, 30-minute trains with a \$7.50 service charge] to such an extent that the 'Century' was soon running with few revenue passengers and the 'Broadway' with almost none."

The numbers told the story. The *General* earned roughly \$3.40 per train-mile in 1937 and \$3.20 in '38, making it one of the top money-makers in Pennsy's fleet. By contrast, in 1937 the

Broadway's revenue was a mere 97 cents per train-mile. By 1940, despite being re-equipped as a beautiful all-room streamliner two years earlier (on June 15, 1938, the same day the *Century* got new cars), the *Broadway* was earning a pitiful 75 cents per mile. Pennsy's flagship had hit rock bottom.

Barriger's better idea

Pennsy really had only two options. One was outright discontinuance, something the company discussed. PRR felt, however, that discontinuing the *Broadway* would cause a loss in prestige and business in excess of any saving to be gained. Barriger, a former Pennsy man, future railroad president, and bona fide operating genius, had a better idea. In a letter to PRR in 1937 referring to the *Broadway's* extra fare, he said, "The questionable return for this negligible addition to the gross revenues of the P.R.R. is that it operates its finest train at a direct loss. . . . Even more regret-

Broadway Limited

PENNSYLVANIA RAILROAD



SPEED AND SECURITY

ARTWORK AND BROCHURES, COLLECTION OF JOE WELSH

table, P.R.R. has erected a practical barrier against virtually all its New York to Chicago passengers enjoying its best train because other available schedules are so near the former's standard that the service charge is not justified. . . . Whether it was the conscious object of P.R.R. passenger strategy (as evidenced by the 'General') or not, it is the logic of it to eliminate the New York-Chicago extra fares . . ."

In spite of Barriger's wise advice, it took a war for PRR to make the right choice. On February 7, 1943, to attain maximum loading of equipment, the railroad discontinued the service charge on the *Broadway Limited*. It would never be reinstated.

The turnaround in the *Broadway's* revenues was dramatic. By July 1946, owing to war patronage, the revenue per train-mile of the Pennsy's whole east-west fleet had increased 217 percent since 1940. The *Broadway's* revenue had risen an amazing 525 percent, and the train was earning a healthy \$3.94 per mile.

PRR never looked back. NYC re-equipped the *Century* in September 1948 but continued to charge an extra fare. By March 1949 the *Broadway*, too, boasted a completely re-equipped train with modern accommodations. Included was a postwar version of the "Master Room," Pullman's largest and most lavish accommodation. While master rooms had been offered on the pre-war *Century*, they had been eliminated from the postwar version.

The *Broadway* may have offered more deluxe room accommodations than the *Century*, but some of the frills were missing. One of the interesting side-effects of eliminating the *Broadway's* extra fare was PRR's reduction in special services on the train. For example, when the train's postwar, mid-train "Harbor" series lounge cars were ordered, Pennsy was debating whether to reinstate the extra fare. Barber, bath, and train secretary facilities were included in the cars to provide deluxe service should the extra fare be brought back, but shortly

before the postwar train was inaugurated, PRR's board decided the new *Broadway* would remain a normal-fare train, so the barber, bath, and secretary space was never used. By 1956 the facilities were replaced with revenue bedrooms.

The lack of deluxe services didn't seem to affect the *Broadway's* patronage. Based on a review of the numbers and the correspondence of PRR Executive Vice President James Symes, there is every reason to believe the *Broadway* had eclipsed the *Century* in popularity by the early 1950's. A comparative ridership report for May 1954 shows the *Century* carried an average 119 passengers per trip; the *Broadway*, which had the advantage of serving two large East Coast markets (New York and Philadelphia), carried 140.

In 1953, Symes exhorted PRR's troops to better performance lest the *Century* try to steal the *Broadway's* passengers: "I happen to know from authentic sources that the New York Cen-

In a postcard made from a painting featured on PRR's 1925 and '26 calendars, a K4 Pacific steams across the Rockville Bridge near Harrisburg, Pa. Used to promote other PRR flyers as well, the image is labeled here for the train which took its name from the road's "broad way" of steel.

Attention to detail helped make the *Broadway* great in the 1950's. Here, PRR's Tom Murphy supervises the make-up of trains in Sunnyside, Pennsy's sprawling New York coachyard.



PRR PHOTO, HAGLEY MUSEUM & LIBRARY COLLECTION



tral are going 'all out' in attempting to re-establish the *Twentieth Century Limited* to its former position in the New York to Chicago service," he wrote. "The patronage of the *Broadway*, together with the favorable comment of the passengers (many of them very important ones) with respect to superior service and more comfortable ride as compared with the *Century*, is causing this improvement drive on

the part of New York Central."

Just how good was the *Broadway*? Listen to its passengers. E. I. du Pont Assistant Director J. W. Brown commented, "Recently (Spring 1956) I took the *Broadway* to Chicago and had plane reservations for the return trip to Philadelphia. The equipment, as usual, was of the best, and the ride was smooth going out, but the service of the train crew, particularly in the diner—the waiters and steward—was such that somehow they made you feel they were glad to have you aboard. Now, as far as I could tell, it was the same group of your employees I have traveled with in the past, but this time something happened—in any event, I was so impressed, I canceled the plane reservation and came back on the *Broadway*, and the trip back was just as nice as in the other direction."

In 1955 Samuel Felton, president of American Car & Foundry, highlighted the personal service of the *Broadway Limited's* crew: "My sleeping-car porter was exceptionally good. Some friends of ours—the Solidays of Philadelphia—lost a key, and the porter even took the trouble to deliver it to them at the Rock Island station some hours later. I know they were most appreciative. . . . As you know, I am traveling almost constantly and it seems to me that over the past years the service on the *Broadway* has come very close to reaching perfection."

Perfection came at a price. Running long-distance trains in the tough Eastern market was no place for the faint of heart. The flying time of the airliner was a small fraction of the running time of a passenger train—and to a businessman, the *Broadway's*

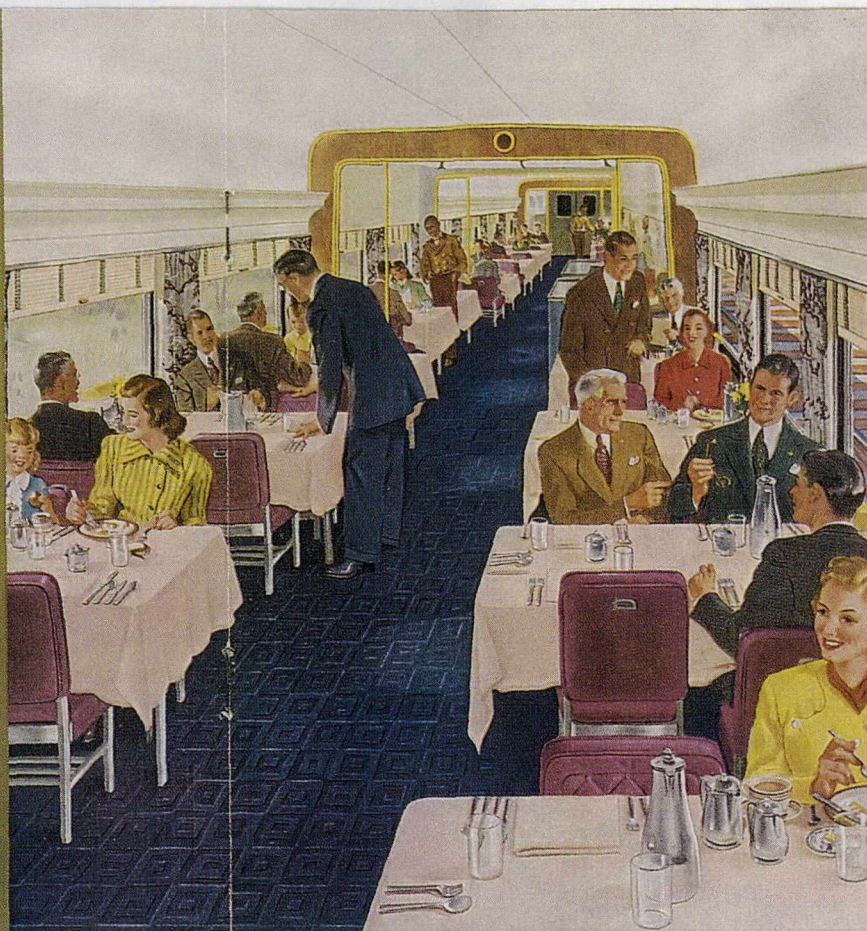
SO INVITING —

THE *Master Dining Car*

You'll detect it the moment you enter . . . sense its significance when the steward greets you. New beauty . . . new spaciousness . . . the *Broadway Limited's* traditional high standard of courteous, meticulous service . . . the festive experience of dining out and the anticipation of delicious food—served you by carefully trained personnel. Pastel-shaded linens, gleaming silverware, the soft harmony of color and charm, the diversified menu—there's a new treat in dining awaiting you here!



Fine foods are prepared in the *Broadway Limited's* modern stainless steel kitchen—located in an adjoining car.



main customer, time was money. As operating costs rose and revenues dropped, Pennsy had been suffering huge passenger deficits for years and worked feverishly to eliminate unprofitable trains. By 1956, even the *Broadway* began feeling the pinch. Records for February '56, one of the train's busiest months, indicated that on a fully allocated basis the eastbound *Broadway* ran at a deficit. The combined east- and westbound train earned a slim net profit of about \$11,000.

Cutbacks and bragging

The same problems that affected the *Broadway* hit the *Century* even harder. In the mid-1950's, Central was operating three top trains in the New York-Chicago market and still charging an extra fare on the all-Pullman *Century*. First to go was the deluxe, all-coach *Pacemaker*,

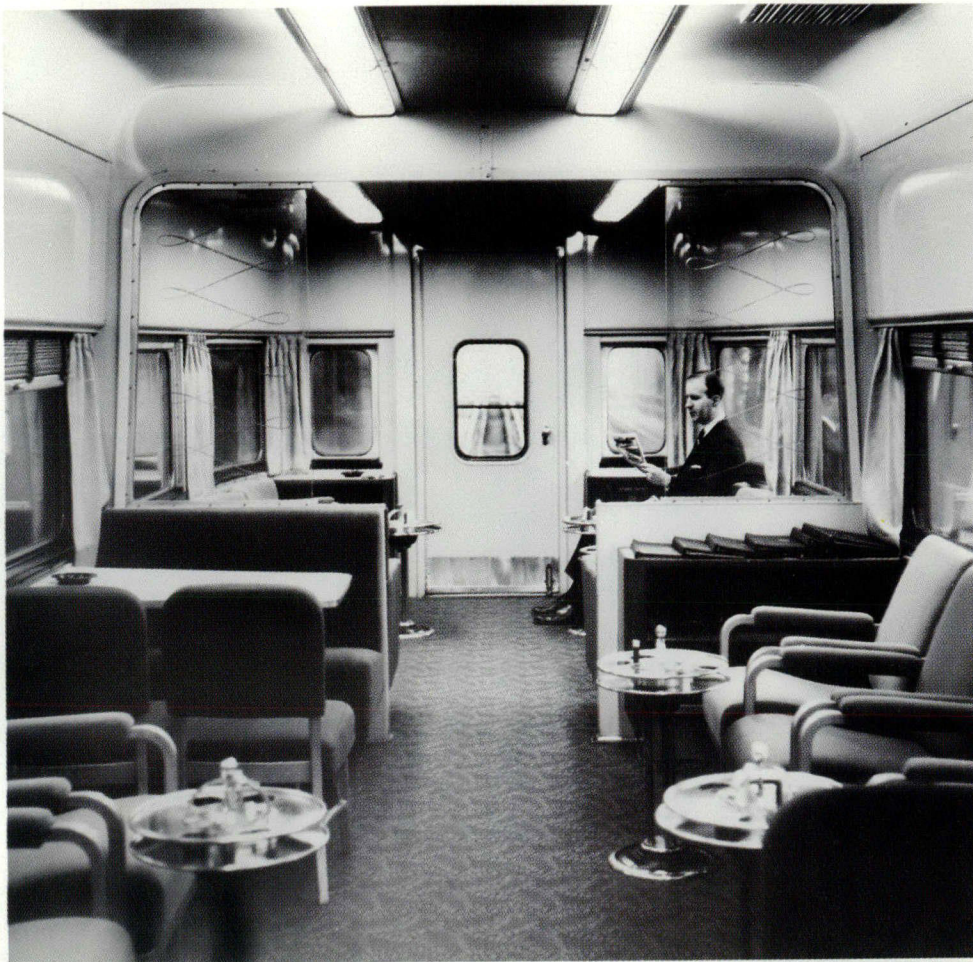
whose coaches were incorporated into the formerly all-Pullman *Commodore Vanderbilt*. Then from August 4 to September 3, 1957, the *Century* and the *Commodore Vanderbilt* were temporarily combined; on April 27, 1958, the combination became permanent. Essentially the *Commodore* was discontinued as its name and train numbers disappeared from the timecard. So did the *Century's* extra fare and its distinctive "Century Club" lounge with barber and train secretary. Now the *Century* carried coaches. The change left the *Broadway* as the only all-Pullman train in the New York-Chicago market.

PRR responded immediately with a campaign entitled "Let's Brag About the *Broadway*," designed to steal the *Century's* passengers. Ticket clerks and sales reps went into high gear. Cars were touched up, maintenance

intensified, an extra sleeper added to the consist, dining-car fare improved, and PRR and Pullman employees made a special effort at courtesy. The all-room *Broadway* remained a beautiful operation despite the chaos and catastrophe which befell its rivals and running mates. Its Tuscan red cars gleamed a little brighter, its staff, at ease in dealing with the great names of the country, exuded an air of friendly competence. There were still flowers on the dining-car tables and waiters in formal white jackets standing at attention as you arrived. Pullman porters remembered your name, brought you coffee and room service when you wanted it, and slipped a memo under your door each morning with the printed weather forecast for your destination—just in case you were wondering how to dress.

At least temporarily, the effort

In a brochure produced to showcase the *Broadway's* 1949 rolling stock—the last new cars it would receive—passengers enjoy a meal aboard the twin-unit diner.



J. W. SWANBERG PHOTO; COLLECTION OF JOE WELSH

On November 19, 1966—just over a year before the *Broadway*'s discontinuance—a lone businessman occupies observation-lounge car *Mountain View*.

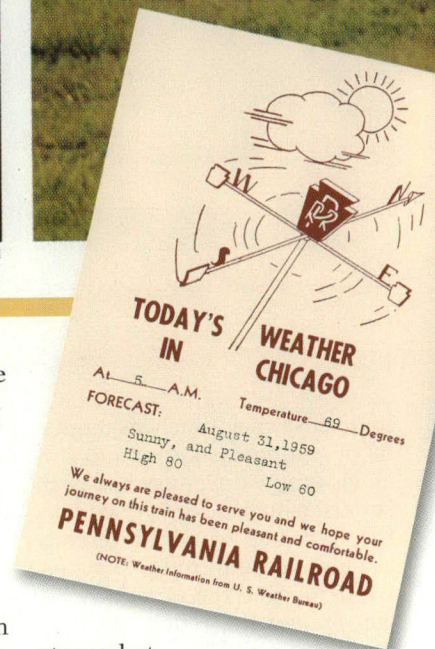
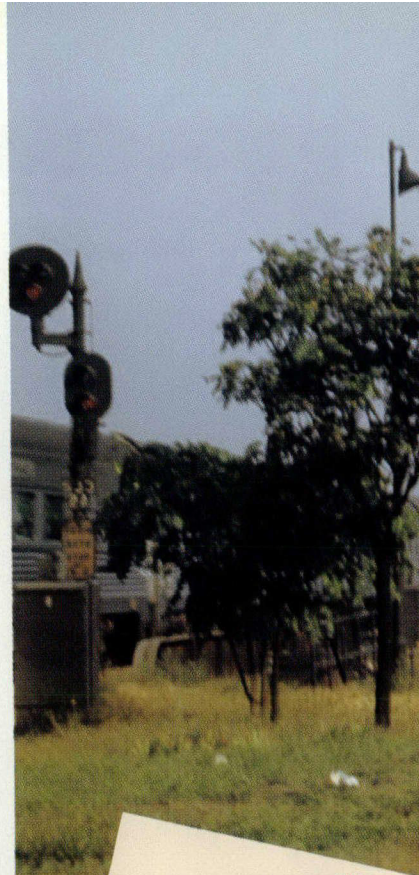
reversed a downward trend in *Broadway* ridership. According to Pennsy's General Manager of Passenger Sales Earle Comer, "In June 1958, we halted the steady decline in *Broadway* patronage. . . . In the first 12 months of our campaign, the *Broadway* carried 13,000 more passengers than in the previous 12 months." Much of the extra business came from former *Century* patrons who transferred their allegiance to the *Broadway*. One of them was Lucius Beebe, noted author and devoted *Century* man, who said of the *Broadway*, "I personally think it is one of the great trains of all time."

But the ridership trend didn't reverse permanently. In 1958 the airlines introduced the jet airliner, and getting there by air got a lot easier. By 1961 the *Broadway* was earning less than it did in 1956 and costing more to operate. That same year, Symes, now PRR's president, initiated studies

to determine how to combine the *Broadway* with the *General*. Pennsy's goal was the complete elimination of the long-distance passenger train. To put it another way, even the all-Pullman *Broadway*, PRR's flagship train, was expendable.

Pennsy anticipated eliminating the *Broadway Limited* on October 25, 1964, using a state-by-state approach. Employing a similar tactic, it also sought the discontinuance of its only other all-Pullman train, Nos. 60 and 61, the *Pittsburgher* between New York and Pittsburgh. Essentially the *Pittsburgher*'s death saved the *Broadway*. The Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission granted the PRR permission to eliminate 60 and 61, but admonished the railroad not to try the tactics it had used too often. The railroad backed down, and for a time the *Broadway* was safe.

While biding its time with the *Broadway*, PRR attempted to



stem what had once again become a serious decline in ridership. The Pennsy initiated an ad campaign for the train in November 1965 designed to re-educate passengers on the advantages of a great name train while poking fun at the airlines. The ads ran in major magazines and newspapers such as *Time* and *The Wall Street Journal*. The railroad even targeted businessmen's wives by placing a series of ads in *Good Housekeeping*. The clever copy drew positive letters from the public, and the *New York Times* even ran a story about the cam-



ANDREW SPIEKER

paign. But the ads didn't help the *Broadway*. At the start of the effort, the *Broadway* was averaging 70 passengers each direction; one year later it was carrying 54.

Endgame

By spring 1966 PRR was again plotting the consolidation of the *General* and the *Broadway*. Further, the railroad—unwilling to pay operating fees to the Pullman Company any longer—took over operation of local-line sleeping cars effective August 1, 1967 (interline cars remained with Pullman). This ended a 65-year relationship between the *Broadway Limited* and Pullman. That same season, the *Broadway* also lost its Railway Post Office car.

Once again the railroad's accountants sharpened their pencils and got to work defining just why the PRR should be allowed to discontinue the best train in the nation. It turned out, though, that even in 1967 on a direct-cost

basis, the all-room *Broadway* was making a net profit of \$144,000 annually. Of course, using the fully allocated cost logic, operating a passenger train required a host of supporting staff and facilities known as indirect costs which, when added to the equation, completely eliminated the profits. Pennsy argued that by combining the *Broadway* and the *General*, it would save \$1.4 million annually. Permission was granted to discontinue trains 28 and 29, the *Broadway Limited*, effective December 13, 1967. Its name was transferred to Nos. 48 and 49, and the name *General* disappeared from the timetable.

To its credit, PRR operated 28 and 29 in the grand manner to the bitter end. The consist wasn't diluted with coaches, and the service was never downgraded. Patrons could still enjoy the special comforts of an all-room train, sip a cocktail in the observation lounge, and sample excel-

lent entrees such as prime rib in the twin-unit dining car right up to the day the train came off. Despite the fact that it was living on borrowed time, the *Broadway*, like a fine wine, just got better with age. Perhaps Pennsy maintained the train as a symbol of what a great transportation organization could do—even if it couldn't afford to keep it running forever. Poignantly, one of the ads produced for the train in that desperate last stand of 1966 asked "... don't you sometimes wistfully remember the *Broadway Limited*?" Rest well, Pennsy, we remember. ■

POSTSCRIPT: The Broadway Limited name would survive the Pennsylvania Railroad, which merged with NYC in 1968, to be used by both Penn Central and Amtrak. In 1972, the Broadway became the first train completely refurbished by Amtrak, which discontinued the train on September 10, 1995.

Still sporting its two-tone prewar equipment, train 28 pulls out of Englewood, Ill. The time is August or September 1948—the *Broadway's* best years are just beginning.

My summer in the

A job as a Grand Central information clerk turned a college kid into an expert in "points east of Buffalo"

By Theodore C. Doege

OF ALL THE JOBS SUITABLE FOR COLLEGE STUDENTS, I found working as an information clerk in New York's Grand Central Terminal to be close to the top. My entree to that position came in 1947, when the New York Central hired me as a reservations clerk, helping me become better acquainted with such rail-travel essentials as junction cities, classes of fares, types of equipment, and timetables. The following summer, NYC offered me a chance to be an information clerk, an opportunity I gladly accepted. My responsibility would be to answer travelers' questions about train travel practically anywhere, but especially to places north of New York City and east of the Mississippi River.


To be an information clerk in the Terminal, you first had to learn the main routes of the New York Central and its Grand Central neighbor, the New Haven Railroad. You had to know the carriers' terminals, as well as larger towns and cities along their lines. And, of course, you needed an equable disposition. Mr. Sebereski, the laconic, white-haired supervisor of the Information Bureau, informed me of the

first requirement and tested me to make sure I met it. Only then did he permit me to sit with a headset and take some of the calls that came in constantly over the Bureau's two-dozen-plus telephones.

One of the best features of being an information clerk was having a railroad pass allowing free transportation to and from the Terminal. My pass, which I used mostly in



Gold Cage



traveling between Grand Central and the Harlem Division suburb where our family lived, indicated it was good only in coaches and not valid on certain of the Central's best trains, specifically the *Empire State Express* and the *Pacemaker*. However, at the bottom of the pass were the words, "Points east of Buffalo," which seemed to suggest one might be able to use the pass for a long trip.

As clerks, we had to respond to a wide variety of questions. What train goes to San Francisco and how much does it cost? How does one get to Martha's Vineyard off Cape Cod? (Take the train to Wood's Hole, Mass., then the ferry.) Or to Newburgh, N.Y., on the West Shore of the Hudson? (Take the train to Beacon, then the ferry across the river.) If one proved adept at answering the questions that came in over the phones, the next assignment might be to work in the information booth on the Terminal's main concourse, the famous "Gold Cage." Here the questions might come

Grand Central's information booth and its clock gleam in the center of the station concourse in this photo by New York Central's Ed Nowak.

INFORMATION

INFORMATION

INFORMATION

INCOMING TRAIN
BULLETIN BOARD
TRACK 42

THE NEW HAVEN R.R. NEW YORK

hot and heavy, especially during rush hours. A clerk would be required to tell people the correct track numbers for arriving as well as departing trains, as well as answer myriad other questions.

The stationmaster in charge of the Terminal and the dispatchers in the towers who guided the trains along the maze of upper- and lower-level GCT tracks had their usual operating practices and routines, and eventually we information clerks got to know many of them. Yet we had to be alert for new track assignments and stay informed about extra trains and other unusual happenings. Much of the basic information we needed was in our collections of up-to-date timetables from the railroad companies. And, of course, you could always consult the *Official Guide*, the thick, softcover monthly publication listing all the stations in the U.S., Canada, and Mexico, and timetables for all the railroads.

Usually one to four clerks would be in the booth on the main concourse, depending on the time of day and day of the week. One or two would be in the lower-level booth, which was right below the main one and connected to it by a steep, winding, inside staircase. I enjoyed working in the booths, especially on the main concourse. I believed we had a rather exalted status. After all, weren't we the ones to whom less knowledgeable, often much older, people had to turn for the answers? I liked the way the workday flew by when we were busy. And there was so much to see in Grand Central: trains and locomotives, displays and shops, lots of people, and the out-of-the-way places of the vast Terminal itself.

In the Gold Cage, you always had a ring-side seat. Early one evening, New York Yankees shortstop Phil Rizzuto stopped at the booth, with the blonde, well-dressed Mrs. Rizzuto at his side. He asked for the track number for the Yankees' train. In those days the teams traveled by train, and on that night the Yankees probably were headed to Detroit, Cleveland, or St. Louis for a series with the Tigers, Indians, or Browns.

People going to the city often agreed to "meet under the clock," the magnificent four-sided timepiece that sits to this day atop the upper-level booth and shows the correct time. If they chose a less-conspicuous place to rendezvous, such as by the tall clock in the lobby of the Biltmore Hotel, somebody in the booth might have to tell one of them how to get there.

My summer as an information clerk was going well when I received an unexpected letter from a friend, Noel, in Cazenovia, N.Y., inviting me to visit. A few months before, my solicitous sister had arranged for Noel, her college roommate, to visit me at college and be my blind date for supper and a Saturday night dance. That April weekend had been rainy and cold, but the attractive Noel, who had a sparkling personality, was a stunning surprise. Certainly I would accept her invitation!

Noel wrote that we might meet in Syracuse on the first Saturday in August. Syracuse, of course, was an important stop on the Central's main line, and it was "east of Buffalo," so I thought perhaps my pass would enable me to get there *gratis*. She invited me to stay at her house and said I should bring my swimming trunks, because we would spend the next day at Cazenovia Lake. We made our plans: I would work on Saturday morning, then depart Grand Central at 4 p.m. on the fast *Ohio State Limited*, which would arrive in Syracuse about 4 hours later.

Finally the first Saturday in August arrived, and right after 3 p.m., I ducked under the counter of the upper-level booth, through the low door at the back, and hurried toward Gate 17, where the *Limited* already awaited passengers. I knew the gateman, and he allowed me to go through. Striding down the ramp, I encountered the NYC conductor and stopped and introduced myself. I asked him about using my pass to travel to Syracuse and showed him the pass; he said he would honor it.

Then I asked the conductor another question: Was there any chance I could ride in the locomotive cab leaving Harmon? He looked at me dubiously, then agreed to talk to the engineer. With some hope, now, of attaining this exceptional honor, I hurried toward the front of the train, passed the observation-lounge sleeper, the other sleepers, and the diner, and found a place in one of the two reclining-seat coaches.

The *Limited* left on time and 46 minutes later stopped in Harmon. Right away I stepped from the train and hurried past the baggage cars toward the head end. Already the electric motor noiselessly was pulling away and an immense Niagara-class 4-8-4 steam locomotive was backing up. The huge engine slowed as it reached our train and coupled on. The engineer eased out the slack, then leaned from the window to talk with the conductor. They conversed for some seconds before the engineer asked to see my pass. I stretched to hand it up. The answer was a pleasant "O.K."; I wasted no time climbing into the cab!

The engineer said I could sit on the fold-down seat behind him; the fireman gave me a friendly nod. Then the engineer leaned out of the cab, looking intently at the rear of the *Limited*. He turned to look ahead, pulled back on the throttle, and fixed his goggles. Immediately I heard a loud bark of exhaust from up front, and the train was under way. Now the exhaust came in a quickening cadence, we gained speed, and a breeze began to cool the hot cab.

The fireman called out the signals on the signal bridges, and the mighty Niagara sounded its harsh whistle as we approached grade crossings along the Hudson River. We rushed and rocked our way north, diving in and out of short tunnels and flashing through the towns of Beacon, Poughkeepsie, and Hudson. Mostly I stood swaying behind the engineer, fascinated by the action in the cab but also watching the right-of-way ahead and at the side.

After the stop at Albany, the powerful 4-8-4 needed no helper up the grade toward Schenectady, even with 14 cars. Splashing over the track pans east of Herkimer, we scooped water into the long tender at speed. The *Limited* was on time coming into Utica. Now I had to leave my special place, hurry back to the coach, and prepare to meet Noel. I thanked the engineer and fireman. I did not doubt they would meet the *Limited's* schedule, which was to cover the 54 miles between Utica and Syracuse in 52 minutes.

Noel was on the platform and hurried to greet me. We walked down to the street and her coupe, then decided to stop for a hamburger and milk shake. She suggested we visit one of her favorite spots, the reservoir in the hills just north of the city. We strolled around it, then rested on an ancient wood bench while moon beams played over the rippling water. We talked about our studies, our interests, summer jobs, and swapped jokes.

Noel was up early on Sunday morning preparing breakfast, then we drove to Cazenovia Lake. On this quiet morn-

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FRANK QUIN

ing the small beach was ours. We rented a small boat at the boathouse and rowed across the lake. After sandwiches and pop for lunch we relaxed, swam to the raft, then sunned ourselves on the beach. That evening we went out for a leisurely dinner. She delivered me to the station some minutes after midnight. As the *New York Special's* bright headlight appeared, we kissed and agreed to write each other. The *Special* was on time in Syracuse; if it stayed that way, I would reach the Terminal in time for the morning shift—and I did.

As the summer weeks passed into September, supervisor Sebereski arranged for me to work in a temporary office of the Association of Eastern Railroads. Our task was to help prepare and distribute briefs on the subject of how many crew members should be assigned to operate diesel-electric freight and passenger locomotives. Ralph Emerson, who had come from the Burlington, directed the effort. So ended my months as an information clerk. A few weeks later, it was back to college in Ohio and new academic challenges.

After that August weekend, Noel and I lost track of each other. A few years later I met Joy, a winsome, intelligent Cal-

In a scene similar to the author's experience, a Niagara replaces electric power as the *North Shore Limited* departs Harmon, N.Y., in March 1946.

ifornia girl who made me forget about Noel, and Joy said "yes" to me in 1956.

About three decades later, Joy and I drove east with our two teenagers to visit New York City and investigate colleges in Massachusetts and Vermont. I had reserved two rooms at the Biltmore Hotel for one night. The next morning, we went down to the lobby and enjoyed sumptuous breakfasts, then strolled by the Biltmore's clock and walked across Vanderbilt Avenue to Grand Central Terminal.

Standing on the Terminal's west balcony for the first time in years, I heard the hum of the busy station and gazed at the still-prominent information booth. Then I told Joy and our teenagers about working in the booth and on the telephones, answering endless questions about trains and rail travel. I told them about spending the summer as a young college student in a field of great interest, with good pay, free train rides, even a memorable trip in a steam locomotive. What sensible college student could ask for more? **1**

Executive recruiter



How many railroaders were inspired by the likes of Otis Sweet?

By Chris Burger



FOR THE RECORD, the man in the cab window of New Haven SW1200 651, at left, is locomotive engineer Otis E. Sweet. I made the picture at South Boston terminal with a Kodak Brownie-Hawkeye camera in 1956 or '57. The 651 was nearly new, but Sweet was getting ready to wrap up more than 50 years in engine service on the New Haven's Midland Division.

New Haven engineers were required to leave "main line" assignments at age 70. They could then work yard assignments as long as their health, and seniority, permitted. Sweet held commuter runs between Blackstone, Mass., and Boston until the mandatory age rule caught up with him, then took a yard job at the South Boston Produce Terminal for several years before retiring.

I was hooked on railroading long before my family moved to Dedham, Mass., in 1947. Dad commuted to Boston from the Endicott station on the Midland, 11 miles out of South Station and the first stop past Readville, riding trains 912 to work and 925 home. Sweet was the regular engineer. Until 1952, his

usual power was I-2 Pacific 1312. Train 925 was due at Endicott at 5:36 p.m., and I was usually camped by the gangway for a chat. Invitations to the cab for a look around were ultimately followed by invitations to "ride along."

Most of my trips were homeward from Boston as my parents weren't sympathetic to requests to skip school for a morning train ride. Threading the slip switches at South Station; through the cut to Back Bay for a station stop; then pounding out Track 1 (of four) to Readville (maximum speed for passenger trains, 90 mph), mixing it up with Needham, Dedham, and Providence locals and an occasional Shore Line express before heading up the Midland connection for the final mile or so to Endicott—it just didn't get any better! Not even when the 1312 was replaced by an Alco DL109 in 1952.

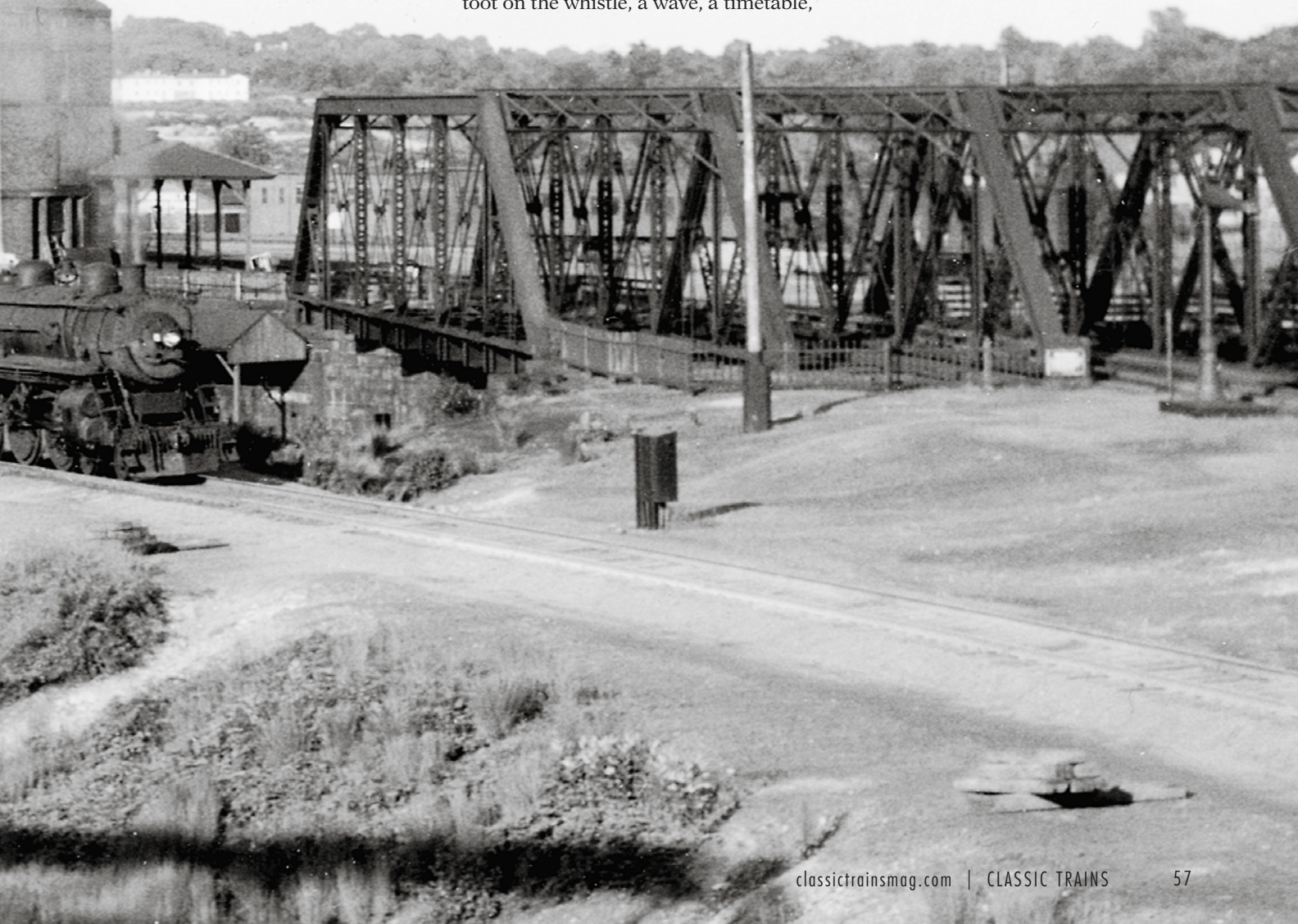
But what is Sweet's "executive recruiter" connection? How many railroaders do you suppose were inspired, encouraged, coached, and yes, in a sense recruited, by the likes of Otis Sweet—in the cab, caboose, motor car, depot, office, or wherever, providing a ride, a toot on the whistle, a wave, a timetable,

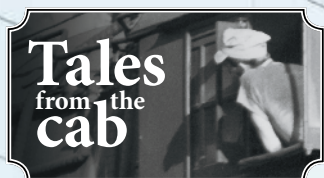
or train orders to take home and study? I know there are many besides me.

One of the challenges facing railroads today is to recruit the next generation of employees—managers and otherwise. For the right person, these are great jobs. That person isn't necessarily a railfan, but having a "feel" for what railroading is all about can be a real plus. It's still about running trains—profitably, on-time, and safely—and it's still people who make them go.

So, while the accompanying picture is of Otis Sweet, I'd like to think, in a larger sense, it's of all the railroaders who recognized the value and the fascination of what they did, understood that others might want to do it too, and tried to help. Here's to all of them and, perhaps more important, to those like them out there today, who are also in a position to be recruiters. ■

In this 1949 photo by Wayne Brumbaugh, New Haven commuter train 925, bound from Boston South Station to Blackstone, navigates the Midland Division connection at Readville. Next stop: Endicott, where the author's father, who probably was on board, will disembark for home.





Author Jack Neiss's nemesis—Penn Central E40 No. 4973—stands at Morrisville, Pa., on March 21, 1976. Behind the former New Haven passenger motor are ex-PRR E44 freight units. Neiss liked the 4973's Hancock air whistle, but its exposed air-brake pipe caused him grief.

George W. Hamlin

BAD-LUCK



Penn Central 4973 and I just couldn't seem to get along

By Jack Neiss

The E40 was not one of my favorite locomotive types; in fact there were occasions when, during my time as a Penn Central engineer at Harrisburg, Pa., I could have run each one of them off a dead-end siding and walked away smiling. One E40 in particular seemed to have it in for me.

E40 was Penn Central's classification for a group of electric passenger locomotives it inherited from the New Haven when the NH became part of PC on January 1, 1969. Built by General Electric in 1955 and wearing the splashy "McGinnis" livery of orange, white, and black, the 4,000 h.p., dual-cab motors were classified EP5 by NH and numbered 370–379. They constituted the first U.S. locomotive fleet to employ silicon diode rectifier technology, in which alternating current from the catenary is changed to D.C. to furnish power to relatively small, diesel-style traction motors. Equipped with pantographs and third-rail shoes, the EP5's handled NH intercity and commuter trains between New Haven, Conn., and both the Pennsy's Penn Station and New York Central's Grand Central Terminal in New York City.

The complex units had a checkered career on the cash-starved New Haven, and by the time of the merger, only six were operable. In addition to reclassifying them, PC renumbered the E40's into the 4970 series and confined them to New Haven–Grand Central trains, having the older but more reliable ex-Pennsylvania GG1's cover the Penn Station trains.

Under PC, the E40's plodded along, drawing their power from overhead catenary on the ex-NH main line and third

rail on the ex-NYC line into Grand Central. Soon, deferred maintenance began to take its toll. The E40's had a habit of catching fire, usually at the most inopportune times and locations. After one particularly smoky fire during rush hour in the Park Avenue Tunnel leading into Grand Central, PC withdrew the motors from service in 1973.

That might have been the end of the EP5/E40 story, but there was one more chapter. By 1974, Penn Central was bankrupt, short of motive power, and doing whatever it could to try to hold itself together. It pulled two of the beasts—4973 and 4977—from the dead line, removed their steam generators and third-rail equipment, and put them into freight service on former PRR electrified lines. It was in this setting that my regrettable association with them began.

In the process of reconditioning the E40's, PC also removed one pantograph from each unit, making them more vulnerable out on the road, should "pan" damage occur, than when they had their original two. This also precluded running with both pans up, as was sometimes done with GG1's to combat ice build-up on the catenary during winter storms. This was a concern of shop personnel at the Enola Yard electric pit near Harrisburg, the west end of PC's former PRR electrified territory. The E40's had at least one redeeming quality, though—PC never removed their Hancock air whistles, which had a beautiful sound. As a musician, I enjoyed hearing a Hancock toot for grade crossings, quite unlike the atonal blastings of other PC locomotives.

ELECTRIC



New Haven EP5 No. 374 (top) wears NH's splashy "McGinnis" livery at 125th Street station, Manhattan, in NYC third-rail territory. Sister 373, now designated Penn Central E40 No. 4973, rolls a commuter express under ex-NH catenary at Mamaroneck, N.Y., on April 20, 1973.

Top, Jim McClellan; above, George W. Hamlin

ACT 1: OH, DEER!

My first experience with an E40 came when I was firing in passenger service in late 1974. I was working with engineer Harold Picking, a delightful gentleman, on Mail 10 from Harrisburg to Meadows Yard, east of Newark, N.J. We were assigned the 4973, which we picked up from the engine exchange crew in the Harrisburg passenger station. Neither Harold nor I had run an E40 before, though we had heard about their somewhat dubious reputation. Harold shook his head, noting that although 4973 had been banished from passenger service, it now was being entrusted with a priority mail train.

Mail 10 wasn't especially heavy that night, just 12 ex-NYC Flexi-Van container cars and a cabin car. After the inbound set of diesels cut away, we coupled up, made our air test, and off we went. The

4973 handled the train rather nicely, surprising both of us at its agility in quickly getting up to track speed, 65 mph. We both noticed the difference in cab signals. In place of the PRR style of three tiny white vertical lights, the aspect for "clear" was a single green light. "Cute," I thought to myself. Harold noted it was making things look a lot like Christmas.

About 10 miles out we passed through Royalton and started our uphill climb toward Elizabethtown. About halfway between those points, around Conewago, the two main tracks passed through a deep rock cut protected by slide fences. This area of the Conewago Hills is home at times to a sizable deer population . . . and they were out on this night. Harold said he counted seven; I counted nine, all running up No. 1 track ahead of the train. *Boom . . . boom . . . boom . . .* and suddenly our view through

the windshields turned red and our train was going into emergency braking.

We stopped about a half-mile east of Conewago, the view ahead still an eerie shade of red but the cab-signal indicator showing a bright green. A weird contrast, but there it was. As I dug in my grip for my flashlight, the conductor and trainman showed up from the rear end, still dressed in their Amtrak uniforms from their trip west the previous day on train 31, the *National Limited*.

While Harold was busy trying to restore the air brakes and reporting our plight to State (Harrisburg) and Cork (Lancaster) towers, I walked with the train crew to the front of 4973 to investigate. As expected, we found deer remains splattered all over the front and side of the locomotive. One of the unfortunate animals had hit the angle cock with such an impact that it broke the brake pipe off behind it, which is why we'd gone into emergency.

So, there we sat for more than 3 hours, unable to go anywhere because of the broken brake pipe, as we waited for other locomotives to pull or push us into the clear. Daylight was now upon us, illuminating the gruesome mess. We finally ended up being pulled back to Roy interlocking by a Harrisburg yard crew, the E40 riding along with the automatic brake cut out and angle cocks closed between it and the lead car. Harold and I rode the 4973, making sure that if we somehow became separated from our train, we could quickly apply the independent and hand brake on the locomotive and bring it safely to a stop.

Mail 10's consist was added to the rear of another eastbound at Roy, and Harold and I stayed with the 4973 for its limp back to Harrisburg. It was a shorter day than usual, but an interesting one—a bit *too* interesting for my taste. Although this bit of bad luck could have befallen any locomotive, I would later come to expect such misfortune with the 4973.

ACT 2: SOMETHING IN THE AIR

In early 1975, I left my regular Harrisburg–New York passenger assignment firing on trains 42 and 43, the *Valley Forge*, to begin locomotive engineer training classes at the PC instruction facility in Wilmington, Del. This took a few months, consisting of both classroom and on-the-road sessions. During that time, I saw the 4973 only once, shoving on the rear end of a westbound iron-ore train coming through Overbrook. I figured PC had gotten wise as to

where to best utilize a troublesome locomotive like the E40: in helper service on the Main Line west out of Philadelphia.

By mid-1975, I was on Amtrak passenger trains once again, not yet promoted full-time to the right-hand side of the cab, even though I had had brief stints as a promoted engineer on the Enola road list and in my hometown of Lancaster. I was working the Harrisburg–Washington section of the *Broadway Limited*, which ran down PC's "Port Road" along the Susquehanna River. Because of my seniority and interdivisional qualifications, if the crew dispatcher ran out of engineers, I was often called on one of my relief days to fill a vacancy or extra assignment out of Harrisburg or Enola. Sure enough, one Sunday afternoon the phone rang; it was Tony, the Harrisburg side B-trick crew dispatcher calling.

"Hey, Jack?" Tony inquired. "Feel like takin' an extra TV-2 over to Morrisville, then deadheading back home? A Jersey crew will take it from there." Instead of running through to North Jersey, the power and crew would change at Morrisville, Pa., the east end of the Trenton Cut-Off that bypassed Philadelphia.

I accepted this assignment readily because I knew that not only would I get paid for the TV-2 run, I'd also be compensated for my regular *Broadway Limited* assignment the following day if I didn't get back to Harrisburg in time to have adequate rest before the *Broadway's* 6:20 a.m. sign-up time.

So off I went to Harrisburg from my home in Elizabethtown. But I had an odd feeling during the drive. Drop the power at Morrisville? Odd for a TV train (from "Trail-Van," PC's term for its intermodal trains), even an extra one. When I got to the Reilly Street yard office in Harrisburg, though, I discovered this TV-2 was actually a TV-2E—E for empty, a ferry move of 40-some TTX flatcars from the Harrisburg terminal to the ones in Weehawken and North Bergen, N.J. I had once handled 157 empty TTX flats with a single E44, so this train's length didn't bother me. What got my attention was TV-2E's power—the 4973.

After the brakeman and I got on the locomotive, I found myself laying my hands on the control stand and telling it, "Behave! Behave! Don't hit anything . . . please!"

The brakeman looked at me. "What are you doing?" he asked.

"Oh, nothing. Just attuning myself to the energies around me, I guess."

"Whatever," he replied.



By August 1973, the E40's had been banned from Grand Central, and 4973 was dead at New Haven (top). Reborn as a freight hauler, 4973 lost a pantograph and got a fresh coat of paint.

Two photos, Paul Carpenito

We were off and running a few minutes later as I related to the brakeman about how I'd been on this same locomotive at the head end of Mail 10 when it hit several deer at Conewago.

"Was that you, man? I heard it was a real mess!"

I continued with my story as we approached the spot where the gory incident had occurred, not realizing that I was starting to lose my main reservoir air pressure. Suddenly the brakeman and I started to hear noises—a loud thumping from back in the carbody, followed by the odor of something hot.

I brought the train to a stop at Elizabethtown station. The 4973's air compressor had blown its high-pressure cyl-

inder, which in turn had ruptured the head-cap and rendered going any farther on our own nearly impossible.

"So much for your attunement," the brakeman noted. Maybe he was right.

This time we got lucky, though. There was a westbound light-power move of three diesels coming at us on No. 2 track.

The quick-thinking train dispatcher had them cross over in front of us, couple on, and pull our train to Lancaster. There we

were met by the local trainmaster, who, searching for an excuse as to what went wrong, suggested that "maybe I hadn't run it right." Now, how does one run a locomotive "wrong" and burn up an air compressor? We were eventually given the three diesels for the remainder of our

**WE STOPPED A HALF-MILE
EAST OF CONEWAGO,
THE VIEW AHEAD STILL
AN EERIE SHADE OF RED.**



The two freight E40's were eventually relegated to local jobs in New Jersey; 4973 works train A-1 west at Princeton Junction in 1976 (top). In June '76, by now under Conrail auspices, 4973 has failed on A-1 at Brown Yard near South Amboy, so a GP30 and RS11 have been called in.

Top, Ralph Curcio; above, Ted Steinbrenner

trip to Morrisville, which, in the absence of the 4973, was uneventful.

We set off the 4973 on the express track at Lancaster before we departed eastward, where it sat for about a week. I heard it had been taken to Morrisville for an air compressor replacement and reassignment to local freight and transfer service on the New York Division, so maybe I was done with it.

That was not to be, as the 4973 and I were destined to meet once again.

ACT 3: FIRE!

Two weeks after the air-compressor incident, Tony the crew dispatcher called again. "Hey, Jack, you wouldn't be interested in running a light-power move to Morrisville, would you?"

"Well that depends, Tony. As long as it's not the 4973."

Tony didn't know what locomotives would be in the light-power move. I accepted his request anyway, because I had missed a trip earlier in the week and needed the extra cash. To make sure, though, I called the Power Desk.

"Right now," the guy on the Power Desk told me, "it's the 4460 [an E44] and another unit tagged on the rear. It's the one you keep screwing up all the time, the 4973. Don't destroy it too bad!"

Well, at least I wouldn't be *on* the 4973 this time. If all went OK, it would just follow peacefully along behind the E44 and cause no trouble. At least I hoped so.

I met my fireman in the crew office, a younger fellow off the Enola yard board named Terry who was making his third road trip. He was a really nice guy, an avid railfan, and a fellow member of the "long-haired hippie-type" railroader

community. We hit it off immediately.

We found our locomotives over on No. 8 track where the change crew had parked them: 4460 with 4973 live-in-tow (pantograph up) behind. I turned the rear headlight of the E40 on "dim" for a marker, checked everything inside, then walked ahead to the E44. I was met along the way by the Harrisburg trainmaster, who was doing a safety-rule check and seeing if our timetables and rulebooks were up to date and in order.

"Jack," he said, "you gonna get that 4973 to Morrisville in one piece, or am I gonna have to start drivin' to Conewago as soon as you leave?"

"Don't bother," I assured him. "It's in good hands."

"Hey, I'm serious, Jack. Something happens this time around and you're out of service!"

The trainmaster may have been kidding, but I didn't take his comment lightly. The other two times I had been involved with the 4973, I had met with trouble. I was hoping the old saying about bad things coming in threes would not apply in this case.

A half hour later, Terry and I were out of Harrisburg, following a Philadelphia-bound M.U. train. We would run via the Main Line to Glen Loch and then the Trenton Cut-Off to Morrisville. Terry was intent on learning what he could about the physical plant of the railroad, but I avoided saying anything about the 4973's antics at Conewago, unless he brought the subject up. Fortunately, he didn't.

Nevertheless, it didn't take long for things to start to go wrong. We were nearing Lancaster when I turned to look back over my engines on a sweeping right-hand curve. I couldn't believe my eyes—the 4973 was engulfed in thick black smoke. We were running short-hood-forward on the E44, so there was about 60 feet of space between us and the middle of the E40. At 50 mph, neither Terry nor I had seen or smelled anything unusual up to that point, so we had no idea how long 4973 had been burning. I muttered an oath while grabbing the radio handset to call Cork Tower.

"4460 to Cork, over."

"Cork answering the 4460," replied the operator, Dick Herr.

"Dick, the 4973 appears to be on fire! I'm still west of Park City right now—where do you want us to stop in case the fire department needs to get to us?"

Already on top of things, Dick called right back. "Dispatcher says pick a place where you think it's the most accessible



No. 4973 is at Harrisburg on October 23, 1978, never to run again. Within a year, the E40's were scrapped, and Jack Neiss was sleeping easier.

Paul Carpenito

and let me know right away!"

I stopped just west of Cork Tower where there had been a grade crossing for Mannheim Pike. This now was a double dead-end street on each side of the railroad at the east end of the Armstrong Cork Co. complex. Access to the burning 4973 now could be had on both sides of the right of way.

We requested the overhead power be cut on all tracks so the fire department could douse the fire. This was done promptly, but waiting for a man from PC's Electric Traction Department to ground the overhead took another half hour. Fortunately the fire was slow-burning once the catenary power was turned off. The cause of the fire was the failure of an insulated cable somewhere between the pantograph and main transformer. It had rubbed through to the point where the insulation began to break down, enabling the high voltage to arc its way through the cable to other electrical components nearby.

It was decided that Terry and I would continue on with the disabled E40 in tow, its pantograph now tied down and a 30-mph restriction placed on us in case

something else happened. As we continued east, the operator at Thorndale told us we would be relieved by another engine crew at Earnest Yard on the Trenton Cut-Off. We had almost 10 hours on duty already, and the dispatcher feared we wouldn't get to Morrisville before we went overboard on the 12-hour law.

On the taxicab ride from Earnest back to Harrisburg, I told Terry about my other unfortunate experiences with the 4973. "Maybe that engine just plain doesn't like you, Jack," Terry noted. I wondered . . . I really did.

Nothing was ever said to me about the latest fiasco, other than the Division Road Foreman wanting to know all the details of what had happened and how Terry and I had handled the situation. In fact we were given a word of praise for spotting the E40 at a location where it would be accessible to the fire department and other personnel. The trainmaster did not pull me out of service.

I never saw that motor again, which

was fine with me. For a while, though, my name and the 4973 were nearly synonymous. References to that locomotive and me in the same sentence were frequently overheard, followed by some laughter. I didn't mind. I later heard that both it and sister 4977 had been put on local freight assignments out of Morrisville, mostly the A-1/A-2 runs that worked the electrified Jamesburg Branch to Brown Yard near South Amboy, N.J., or taking auto-parts cars up to Metuchen. Both were withdrawn from service for good within a year of Conrail's April 1, 1976, start-up. The 4973

and 4977, along with the other remaining derelict E40's that had never entered freight service, were scrapped in 1979.

Now, after nearly 40 years, my feelings for the 4973 have mellowed. I will always consider that this locomotive and I shared a wee bit of folly in our times together, and those memories always make for a good story from an old retired rail-roader. ■

I COULDN'T BELIEVE WHAT I SAW BEHIND ME. THE 4973 WAS ENGULFED IN THICK BLACK SMOKE!