



A Trip to
Philadelphia

- March 29, 2005 -

By Saul Wilson

As it was my Spring break and my mom had nothing planned, she had proposed that we take a trip to Philadelphia to view an exhibit of Salvador Dali's artwork, after which I might have some time to ride trains. On Tuesday, March 29, 2005, we went up to Philadelphia to fulfill those purposes. Many thanks to my mom for funding the trip and tolerating me during it.

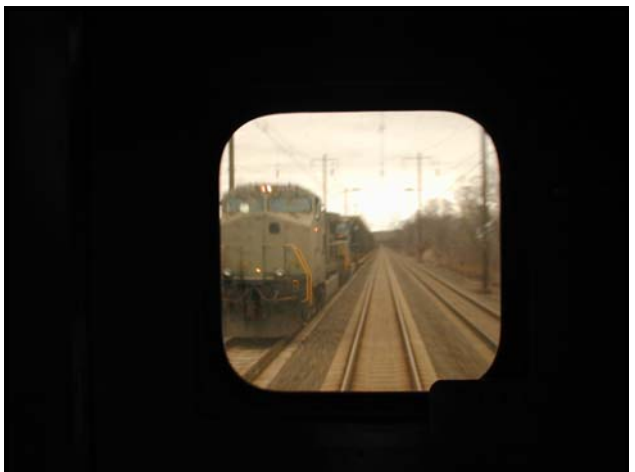
The trip started with my dad taking my mom and me down to Pennsylvania Station (Baltimore), where we were to board an Amtrak *Regional* train to Philadelphia. We walked immediately over to the ticket machines to collect our tickets: an unreserved train from Baltimore to Philadelphia and a return from Trenton. We had ordered, as the computer compels you to do, our "unreserved tickets" for specific trains: the 8:12 out of Baltimore and the 7:15 departure from Trenton. We had decided after booking the tickets that we would actually take the 9:17



Our train to Philadelphia arrives (in Baltimore).

train from Baltimore, so we could sleep in. Of course, we arrived at the station in time to board the 9:17 train, not the 8:12, which so confused the ticket machine that it cancelled our tickets. (This we discovered only after about three run-throughs with it.) We marched over to the ticket agent and purchased another set of unreserved tickets. In this process, I apparently left my camera on a ledge, which was thankfully discovered by an Amtrak policeman whom I knew.

After this was all resolved, I went downstairs to observe the normal Amtrak services and wait for our train. Just before its departure, my mom came down to the platform to board with me. We boarded the cafe car (the second car on the train) and walked backwards in search of two seats. We eventually concluded that two seats next to each other were not going to be found, so my mom sat down in one car and me one car further, next to a man using both his laptop computer and his cellphone. After a few moments of uncomfortable sitting (with no view, either), I walked to the rear of the train (a quiet car) and looked through the rear window at the tracks we went over and the trains we passed, or were passed by. I remained here until just south of Wilmington, where I moved up to the cafe car, which also provided a stellar



Cover: A Subway-Surface car stops at 30th St. Station.

A Norfolk Southern train south of Wilmington, seen through the rear window of our Amtrak train.



Amtrak's 30th St. Station.

view of trains and train yards.

We detrained at Philadelphia, at which point I naturally collected a large number of timetables. My mom then suggested that we ask an Amtrak policeman sitting in the makeshift “police station” where there was a good place for lunch, within walking distance of the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Doing so, we specifically asked about the Market, which he obligatorily suggested and said was reachable by taking a commuter train to Market East station. From the

Market, he said we could take a 25 to 30 minute walk to the art Museum. We subsequently walked to the SEPTA ticket office, where we purchased two day passes and inquired as to whether we could take intra-city regional-rail rides on it, without using the one commuter train ride that it permits. They answered a definite “no,” so we crossed the street to the Market-Frankford Line, which, along with the Subway-Surface Lines, parallels the regional-rail lines through the city. The Market-Frankford Line and the Subway-Surface Lines actually share their tunnel through the 30th Street Station, so, as we waited for our train to arrive, street cars (some going to our destination) kept passing us by.

Once our train finally arrived, we rode it to 11th Street, where we saw a Presidents Conference Committee (PCC) streetcar and hurriedly debarked. (While doing so, we observed a barefoot train passenger kneeling and praying in the aisle. What next?) We reviewed the PCC car and discovered that the car was actually part of the SEPTA Transit Museum/Store, housed in the same building. It had an interesting array of train history books and memorabilia, along with the usual toddler toys. We, naturally, inspected the store, but, due to our slight hurry, I



The rear of a Market-Frankford Line train, sitting in 30th St. Station



A refurbished PCC streetcar in SEPTA's 11th St. Station.

didn't have time to make any purchases. As we walked out of the station we asked a policeman, who had just started going down an escalator, where the Market was. We couldn't understand his directions, so we walked outside and looked for another person to ask. Just beyond the station we crossed a road, in the center of which there was a streetcar track; I assumed this was for the soon to be reopened (after a 13 year "maintenance" shutdown) #15 Streetcar Line. It was actually for the #23 Streetcar Line, still operating as a bus line due to *its* 13 year "maintenance" shutdown, which shows no signs of ending. Regardless, we still were in need of lunch, so we asked a man standing on the corner of Market and 11th Streets where the Market was. He directed us to go south a couple blocks.

We eventually entered the Reading Terminal Market, housed in the old Reading Railroad's station, and my mom purchased our lunches. I had a disgusting, oily Philly Cheese Steak and my mom had a mediocre Middle-Eastern sandwich. I also had a good tasting fruit juice from the same Middle-Eastern store. After completing most of our lunches and packaging the remainders, we hurried off past the beautiful City Hall and up Benjamin Franklin Parkway. We passed Suburban Station and the Benjamin Franklin Science as we rushed up the Parkway, which was lined with flags from every imaginable country. The Parkway has the worst pedestrian crossing system of any road I have ever traversed!

We finally made it to the art Museum, at about 12:25; we had tickets for the 12:30 entrance to the Salvador Dali exhibit. We quickly went up to the ticket office to have our tickets



An advertisement for the Dali exhibit on the main entrance to the Philadelphia Museum of Art.

The artwork by Salvador Dali, from my negative vantage point, appeared to focus mostly, if not solely, upon the gruesome. Ten rooms were filled with gruesome paintings and, from time to time, a sculpture. One painting focused upon the break-down of communications between Britain and Hitler, gruesome, but at least explainably so. The least ghastly painting, though, was of the Spanish train station of Perpignan, which he titled "the center of the universe."

printed, which they did after a short confusion because of a broken computer. We then asked where we could check our coats, and misunderstood the answer: the guard had not said to go downstairs, just to go straight and then to the left (into the coat check). We understood the directions as go straight, then to the left (down the stairs), and to a coat check. Thankfully, there was a coat check downstairs, too. After checking all but my camera, my mom started her search for a bathroom. The closest one to the coat check was closed, so we went back upstairs. There she went to the bathroom, and we started looking for our tickets to the exhibit. We could not find them, because we had checked them with our bags. We hurried downstairs and waited in line at the coat check. We eventually had them and went back upstairs to go into the exhibit! Here, we had to wait in line with

all the people scheduled to go in at 1:00. We ultimately made it in. We quickly went through the exhibit, before leaving at 1:45 to catch the first of the day's eight local trains.

We traveled back down Benjamin Franklin Parkway as fast as our legs would take us and purchased water from a stand in front of Suburban Station. We crossed two more streets and entered the Market-Frankford Line at the 15th Street Station. We rode the line out of the tunnel it uses in the center city and along its western elevated portion to its end at 69th Street. There we observed two 100-Norristown Line trains before traveling to the 101-Media/102-Sharon Hill Lines' section of the station. After my mom ate the remainder of her lunch, we



A 102 Line light-rail departs the Clifton-Aldan stop.

boarded a 102 Line train, which we rode to Clifton-Aldan. (This train was actually an earlier one than I had scheduled us to ride, but since we arrived at the 69th Street terminal early, we rode it.) The ride included some running along streets, in streets' medians, and along separate rights-of-way. At Clifton-Aldan we disembarked and watched as an outbound R3-Elwyn regional-rail train went past. We then, slowly, crossed two streets to reach the regional-rail station, where we waited for a train to the Center City and my mom ate the remainder of *my* lunch. Just seconds before it came, we saw two light-rails travel by on the street, including the one we were scheduled to be on.

We boarded the first car of the regional-rail train and I stood immediately behind the cab, giving me a gorgeous view of the one train we passed by on our trip. When we arrived at 30th Street Station, we got off and, purchasing and eating a cinnamon pretzel, rushed to the Subway-Surface Lines station, across the street. There we waited less than ten minutes, watching about a dozen trains go by, before our 11-Darby Line trolley arrived. This we boarded and rode through slums to its terminus, where we got off, walked to the departure platform, and got on the same trolley back into downtown. All throughout the trip, my mother complained of the "pointlessness" of the exercise, demanding that the trip be cut short. I grudgingly agreed, on the terms that I could then be grumpy all evening. She eventually relented, allowing us to transfer at 30th Street station to the Market-Frankford



An R3-Elwyn Line train enters Clifton-Aldan Station.



A 13 Line streetcar stops at 30th Street Station.

Line, which we rode to the 8th and Market station. There we transferred to the PATCO Line into New Jersey; we rode only to the Broadway/Walter Rand Transportation Center stop. Purchasing tickets for this was no easy feat; there were four levels of tickets, each of which must be purchased by a different mechanism. We did not have exact change, so we were forced to use the change machine. That completed, we boarded the first train to arrive. Along the trip, we surfaced to cross the Delaware River, giving us a beautiful

view. We then quickly dove back underground.

Upon arrival at the Walter Rand Transportation Center, we bought tickets for our ride to Trenton on New Jersey Transit's River Line. We easily bought the first ticket, but the second one the machine only sold to us after three or four attempts, all of which ended up with it hawking a 10-trip ticket. During this, we missed a Trenton-bound train, but we caught the next, which was full. That we rode along the Delaware River as evening set in. When we completed our trip to Trenton, I, of course, scrutinized the station and the trains in it. Just before our train arrived, a twelve-car Amtrak *Clocker* (New York to Philadelphia) pulled in, with a New Jersey Transit engine (the start of the planned handover of the service to New Jersey Transit). The train was absolutely full, and I was nearly knocked over by the throngs exiting it. Next, our train arrived, which we boarded. On it, I ate a greasy pepperoni pizza with a chocolate-chip cookie and my mom guzzled a Samuel Adams beer and munched on her raisins and nuts mixture, which she had purchased in Trenton. We arrived home only slightly late (the train had left Trenton 5 minutes late), and my father soon picked us up and took us home.



A River Line light-rail at the Broadway PATCO station.



An Amtrak *Clobber* arrives in Trenton.