

Trip to Philadelphia and New York June 25th – 28th, 2003



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Introduction

From June 25th to 28th, 2003 my father and I took 36 trains belonging to seven different transit companies through five different states, as a Christmas and Birthday present. I developed about 15 different schedules in the planning stages, before settling on this particular one, just about twenty-four hours before it happened. What started as a two-day train-only trip became five days, three of which were dedicated to trains. My dad then decided that at least three hours a day had to be devoted to sightseeing.

Philadelphia - June 23rd

We left Baltimore at 7:47a.m. on train 172 to Philadelphia. We had originally planned to switch trains at Wilmington to take the R6 Norristown commuter train to Philadelphia, but because I wanted to see different lines and the connection time was only four minutes, we changed the schedule. When we arrived in Philadelphia we explored 30th Street Station and



A SEPTA R1 Airport train arriving in 30th Street Station Philadelphia.

bought day passes. We went on to the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA) platforms, which are above Amtrak's, and waited for the Norristown train. We were scheduled to take the 9:36a.m. train, but there was a train thirty minutes earlier, so we

decided to take it. When it came, however, we were confused by the signs announcing both Airport and Norristown, so we skipped it and took the one originally planned, which meant that we could see more trains in the busy Philadelphia station. The station opened in 1934, built by the Pennsylvania Railroad, it has since gone under Amtrak ownership. It is on the National Register of Historic Places.

We boarded the train which was only two cars long. It was an Electric Multiple Unit (EMU). The train traveled through the Center City tunnels, going through Suburban Station and Market East Station. After leaving the tunnels before Temple University, we traveled toward Norristown. We alighted from this train at Norristown Transportation Center

(NTC), stepped onto a shabby-looking platform, and walked up to a pretty glass-sided station. It was a bus-terminal on the first floor and had a rapid-transit rail station on top. We went into the elevator to the 2nd floor and waited to change trains to a 100-Norristown line train.



A 100-Norristown Line train sits in Norristown Transportation Center.

The 100-Norristown line was constructed by

the Philadelphia & Western Railway (P&W). The Philadelphia & Western's first line was from 69th Street to Strafford in 1907. In 1912 the Norristown

branch opened from 69th Street to Norristown, breaking from the Stratford line at Villanova. At its peak, the railroad operated trains at 75m.p.h., and a train every 2½ minutes. In 1956, the Stratford branch was abandoned. One attribute of the line is that it uses high platforms and a 3rd rail system and traverses sparsely populated areas, an unusual setting for a rapid transit system. It is also one of the two remaining inter-urban lines in the U.S., the other being the South Shore Line.

We were scheduled on the 10:20a.m. train, which should have departed 3 minutes after our train from Philadelphia, but it did not arrive. One “out-of-service” train car was sitting next to the platform but it showed no sign of movement. Nobody noticed that our train did not appear, so we took the 10:40a.m., which was, like all other cars on this route, a self-propelled car.

The train looked unusual because it was sharp-edged. The first section of the line was a huge single-track trestle, followed by a double track route through the suburbs of Philadelphia into 69th St. terminal. Here, we alighted



A Market-Frankford El train awaits departure in the 2nd St. Station.

and walked to the 101-102 Light-Rail line terminal. It was interesting to see the Light-Rail using a bus terminal as a depot. After looking at it and taking a picture, we went to the Market-Frankford El. We boarded the El, which is elevated

for a couple of miles, and then drops into a tunnel in the Central City area. The line was opened on December 18, 1906, operating with streetcars; a year later, heavy rail started operating on the line.

We got off at 2nd St. Our original plan had been to visit the Philadelphia Museum of Art, but because of the 20-minute delay at NTC, we decided to eat lunch instead. We walked past several acceptable outdoor restaurants, but decided to try to find something better. We ended up walking by the Liberty Bell complex and asking two policemen if they could direct us to a good, outdoor restaurant. They sent us to a new restaurant two blocks away, where my dad ordered tilapia with rice and a very good sauce, while I ate excellent homemade pasta.

After lunch we walked one block to the Port Authority Transit Corporation (PATCO) stop and waited for a train to take us to 15/16th St. Station. The train that arrived was quite an



A PATCO train arrives.



A Broad Street Subway train.

old one where the driver's compartment was completely open to the public. The line opened on January 4, 1969 connecting Camden, NJ and Lindenwold, NJ. On February 15, 1969 service began into Philadelphia. The top speed for the line was raised to 75m.p.h. The line is a patchwork of older separate lines. When we got off, we walked one block to the Broad St. Subway. From above ground, one could see City Hall just one block away, which

would be our destination for this part of the journey. The Broad Street Subway opened on September 1, 1926. It has since been extended.



A Subway-Surface streetcar at

We then walked to the Subway-Surface Station, which was one level above. The Subway-Surface lines are the only streetcar lines which survive in Philadelphia. They run underground beneath the city, but at surface level elsewhere. In 1991 SEPTA “temporarily” shut down the three remaining aboveground

streetcar lines, replacing them with buses. The temporary shutdown continues to this day. One line is currently under reconstruction and is expected to open in January 2004.

On our journey we decided the Subway-Surface would have to do. We rode the one, packed and very jerky, car to 19th St., the next stop. From there, we walked back toward City Hall, not forgetting to stop at Starbucks for iced-chocolate and coffee. From there, we walked to Suburban Station, one of the main stations in Philadelphia’s urban inner city.

Since the afternoon was progressing, my dad decided that we should take an earlier train than was scheduled to Princeton. We took the SEPTA R7 line to Trenton, NJ, with the main feature being the “TRENTON MAKES THE WORLD TAKES” bridge. We then rushed to the next platform to board the New Jersey Transit (NJT) train to Princeton Junction. We managed to get on one of the new Comet V cars shortly before the train left and took our seats.

Moments after leaving the station, I was videotaping a map on the compartment wall when the conductor came and told me it was against the



A Comet V car in Trenton, NJ.

copyright law to do so. I immediately stopped, but started videotaping the rest of the car. Over the loudspeaker we heard a booming voice demanding, “Young girl, stop videotaping!” I obeyed and wasted the rest of the trip in my comfortably de-

signed seat.

We left the train at Princeton Junction and watched two Amtrak trains zoom through the station at high speeds. We then walked under the track to the Princeton Shuttle where we boarded an extremely muddy single-car shuttle to the University. The shuttle is locally known as the “Dinky”, or as the “PJB” (Princeton Junction and Back.) We walked down Princeton’s main street, Nassau St., to a corner where our friends, Martin and Margaret, picked us up. When we got to their house, we had a superb dinner of hamburgers and potato salad, and talked until about nine o’clock when we went to bed.

New York - Day One - June 24th



A New Jersey Transit ALP-46 sitting in Penn Station.

We woke up early for a quick breakfast and our 8:15a.m. Dinky to Princeton Junction. From there, we took an express train to New York Penn Station (NYP), which was composed of Arrow EMU cars. We then transferred to the 1 local subway service taking us to the subway station near the

house of our friends, Anne and Warren. We dropped off our luggage and said, “Hello!” to Warren, who had recently injured his arm in a bicycle accident. We took the M4 bus to the Metropolitan Museum of Art (MET) where we looked at a few of the major exhibits.

Metropolitan Museum of Art

By W. Stephen Wilson

First, we did our obligatory visit to the Egyptian exhibits. After that we headed for the special exhibits on prehistory of the Middle East. They were great and on the way there we went through a hall nearly full of Rodin sculptures, wow!

We then walked a long way to a very good, indoor restaurant where I had a delicious, chicken pot-pie with stacks of mushrooms which I had

to remove. My dad had a splendid veal and eggplant dish. We then walked several blocks to the Number 6 Subway, which we rode to 32nd Street. We passed through Korea Town on our way to Penn Station. We gathered Long Island Rail Road (LIRR) and NJT schedules before boarding the Amtrak Ethan Allen Express, which was headed to Rutland, Vermont.



The Ethan Allen Express in Yonkers, NY.



A Metro-North Railroad train sits in Yonkers, NY.

The train traveled below Riverside Park and emerged in time to see a not-so-scenic highway, cutting through the park. We traveled across the Harlem River and continued to travel along the Hudson River to Yonkers where we detrained. When we got off the train and took its picture we noticed the conductor trying to jimmy open a stuck door. The train departed about 5 minutes late and we then walked down to the ground level and bought Metro North tickets to Grand Central. It was unclear as to which platform our train was due to arrive at. Luckily we guessed correctly, and boarded our Hudson Line train.

We rode into Grand Central

and bought tickets for our trip to White Plains. We boarded an express train, which was to skip all stations before White Plains. After departing from

Grand Central, and crossing the Harlem River, yet again, I was invited by the person in the rear cab to take pictures of the many passing trains. After asking him some questions, I learned that he was the Head Engineer for Metro-North. I questioned the engineer about Metro North's many capital projects. I also asked him why the train we were on was operating as an EMU, and the local trains with separate engines and coaches. We got off at White Plains and took another express train back to Grand Central.

I took pictures of trains in Grand Central, and then we looked at the Transit Museum's exhibit on railroad posters from 1870 to 1950. The Transit Museum was under reconstruction and was therefore in the unlikely location of Grand Central Station. The Transit Store had also moved to Grand Central Station and I looked around at all the subway paraphernalia,



A Metro North train sitting in Grand Central.

but purchased only a small subway punch-out model. Some of the commodities they were selling were socks and shirts for each line.

Next we boarded the S shuttle to the 2/3 Express to the 1 line back to Warren and Anne's. This was all against the original plan, but since

my dad had become annoyed with the number of trains, he demanded that we forego the LIRR trip to Jamaica.

New York – Day Two – June 25th

The next day we boarded the 1 to 42nd St. – Times Square. There we transferred to the N/R Subway Line to 33rd St. – Herald Square. We boarded the Port Authority Trans-Hudson (PATH) train, which was underground until surfacing in New Jersey at Journal Square. The train then traveled parallel to Amtrak and freight train tracks until it crossed the Passaic River. After that, it arrived at the Upper Floor of the Newark Penn Station. We looked around the station and walked out into the bus-boarding area. We pondered as to which direction the NJTransit headquarters building would be, but decided it would make more sense to go back into the station and ask Customer Services. They told us to retrace our steps and walk towards a building with an NJTransit logo posted on the top floor. After taking a considerable amount of time negotiating the busy bus-lanes, we managed to get into the building. We asked the receptionist who I could talk to about system planning. She asked us to wait a few minutes, and when she returned she instructed us to go back to the Station and talk to Customer Services again. Having a slight experience with Customer Services I decided it was a waste of time and we walked back to the station and meandered down to the Newark City Subway.

The Newark City Subway was built when Newark had many trolley lines and the Morris Canal was abandoned and aging. The City decided that the Canal Basin could be used as a trolley main line, and the tracks were laid. In the city center a



A NJT light-rail arrives at the Newark City Subway Station under Newark Penn Station.



A PATH train arrives in Newark Penn Station.



A NJT train departs Pavonia-Newport Station.

new road was built above the trolley line.

Further up the line, small ditches were built for spur lines.

We next boarded the Newark City Subway Line at Penn Station, which was under reconstruction, and traveled to the first station outside of the tunnel, which was Norfolk St. The service was operating with semi-low floor vehicles, which were brand new. They had just replaced the ancient President's Conference Committee Car (PCC). We walked across the street to the other light-rail platform and rode the train back to Newark, Penn Station.

We boarded PATH on the lower level and took it to Pavonia Newport, the station before the Hudson River tunnels.

When we detrained,

we walked to the ground level of the spacious station, and followed the signs to the Hudson-Bergen Light Rail. We then watched one light-rail train disappear in the opposite direction, and bought our tickets to Hoboken, the next stop, and the end of the line. We boarded another of the semi-low floor trains, and the train immediately switched to a high-level track. I then began to talk to a fellow railfan, who explained that there was a wye in the track just ahead of us, because they were building an extension northwards. We arrived in Hoboken and looked at many idling trains. Once again, I was told it was forbidden to videotape. An employee gave me permission, after which I taped for a couple of minutes. We then walked to the PATH station and traveled to 33rd St. in New York, where we transferred to the N/R Subway, and went to Whitehall St.

We walked around the financial district and found a small restaurant. We ordered pastries stuffed with spicy chicken, potatoes, and sausage, so we had an interesting and very tasty lunch there. We then wandered around in search of the Staten Island Ferry Terminal. When we reached it, it was packed with commuters waiting to cross. We boarded a free ferry which took us past the Statue of Liberty into St. George Ferry Terminal on Staten Island. After entering the Staten Island Railway (SIR) station we were told not to take pictures of the Staten Island trains. We put our Metrocards through the machines, and then figured out which of the five or six trains to board.

The SIR only operates one line, and a branch to the baseball stadium, but they continue to use their large train station. The Metropolitan Transportation Authority, which operates and owns the SIR, inherited the station from the

Staten Island Rapid Transit Railway Company, which was owned by the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad. Service on the line started on April 23, 1860 from Eltingville to Vanderbilt Landing. At its peak the service operated three lines, from St. George to Arlington, from St. George to Wentworth Ave., and from St. George to Tottenville. The branch to the baseball stadium was a reopening of



A SIR train departs Tompkinsville.

part of the Arlington branch. The Arlington branch, when open, connected with mainland-New Jersey.

After boarding our train, we rode it to the next stop, Tompkinsville. We waited for the next train to St. George. As it arrived, my dad and I sneaked in some pictures of the train.

We hopped aboard, and rode to St. George. Then we transferred back to the ferry and traveled back to Manhattan. In Manhattan we walked to the 1 stop, South Ferry. The reason for boarding here rather than at Whitehall was that South Ferry has a loop platform, soon to be removed. The loop platform allows Southbound trains to loop around in a circle and travel Northbound without the driver walking from one end of the train to the other. Because of the sharp curve the station is on, a platform extension is necessary for the middle doors on each car. We boarded a train for Christopher St., where we walked around Greenwich Village. Following that, I had, yet another, ice-chocolate. We boarded the Subway at Christopher St. and traveled to Columbus Circle,

59th St. We then walked up Broadway to 79th Street, where I persuaded my dad that we should take the Subway to 110th St. Shortly thereafter he



A 1 line train arrives.

persuaded me that we should leave the subway at 96th St. This we did, and continued on foot.

Saturday, Sunday, and Return

By Steve Wilson

On Saturday Anne, Warren, my

dad and mom, and I took a long walk in

Central Park before we hit the Museum of Natural History. That evening we went out to dinner at a Japanese restaurant where they had our favorite Japanese spice, mountain pepper, which is not like either pepper or mountains. We then went to an Athol Fugard play, Master Harold and The Boys, starring the famous actor, Danny Glover.

On Sunday we took a long walk in Riverside Park and later took a train home to Baltimore, which was, of course, late.

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