

Pennsylvania Railroad K4s 5406

Unique Among Equals

BY RICHARD GLUECK

Many historically significant locomotives hauled commuters on the Long Island Rail Road during the Pennsy era. G5s 5741, E6s 460, and K4s 3750 (now in the collection of the Railroad Museum of Pennsylvania) are three. Other notables rode on LIRR rails but never earned a cent in service—S1 6100, which appeared at the 1939 World's Fair, being the most celebrated.

Ownership of LIRR was much like "colonization" for the

parent road. The commuter line fed thousands of riders into Penn Station each morning, and connected Island products into PRR's diverse freight system. The Long Island's fleet of Camelbacks were augmented with D16sb Americans, then phased out and replaced with new G5s ten-wheelers and surplus, H10s Consolidations. Pennsy also leased express passenger power to LIRR, and this is where the sometimes curious story of K4s 5406 begins.



The earliest known photo of 5406 on LIRR, July 21, 1934, location Mineola, leading Train 12, *Shinnecock Express*. It's pretty much as delivered by Baldwin, and wearing the elegant LIRR trademark smokebox paint scheme. The large headlight, bar pilot and four-legged classification lights make this the most admired K4s design. (Charles B. Chaney photo; Ron Zinn collection)

▶ 5406 is pulling LIRR 4613 westbound descending Cold Spring Hill, Cold Spring Harbor, N.Y., on a cold March 16, 1947. The smoke is tightly blossoming in the chilled air.

(Edward Hermanns photo; David Keller collection)





▲ 5406 pulling Sunday-only Train 4229 from Yaphank westbound past “B” Tower at Bethpage Jct., Bethpage, N.Y., on May 11, 1947. 5406 retains the attractive smokebox paint scheme and bar pilot, but the new headlight and generator swap have been inflicted.

(George E. Votava photo; David Keller collection)



▶ New Fairbanks Morse C-Liners will relieve K4s Pacifics of their LIRR work shortly after 5406 was photographed at Nassau Tower. This photo seems to capture the speed and size of the breed. Compare this image with the lead Shinnecock Express photo, also at Mineola. *(Art Huneke photo)*



◀ Morris Park, Oct. 26, 1935. LIRR typically placed sheet metal over the Pennsy bar pilots.

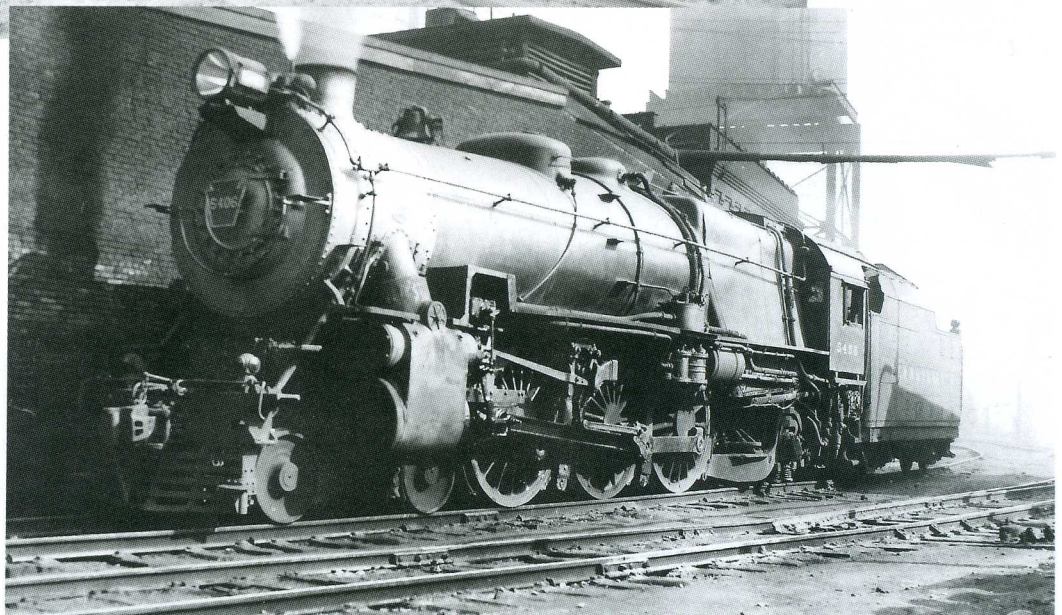
(Rod Dirkes photo; Ron Zinn collection)

▶ A little girl stands back on the platform as 5406 draws a westbound commuter train into a rural station on Long Island. (Art Huneke photo)



◀ Train 7 at New Hyde Park, July 21, 1940. Note the smaller tender and the wooden crossing diamond. This area would eventually become one of the most problematic street level crossings for LIRR. (Harold Fagerberg photo; Ron Zinn collection)

▶ Morris Park. By the early 1940s, the Pacific lost the four-legged marker lights on the smokebox, but retained those on the pilot beam. (Harold Fagerberg photo; Ron Zinn collection)

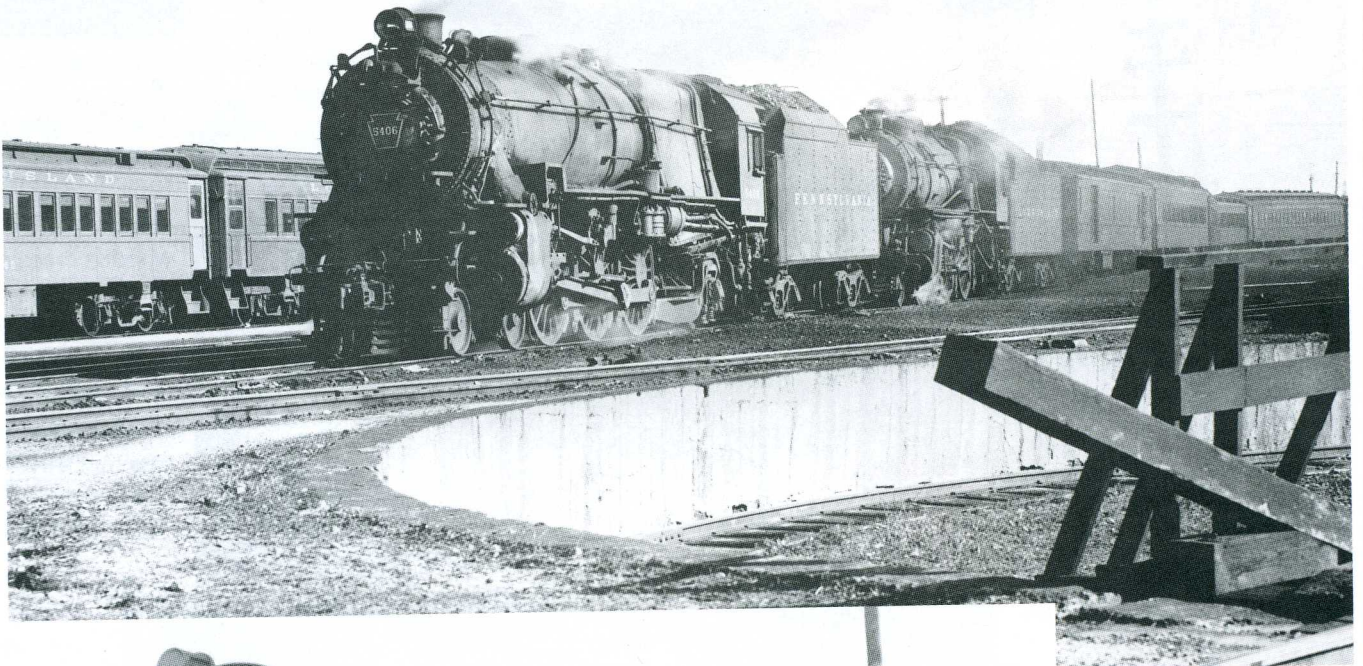




◀ 5406 westbound at Bellerose in 1950. A young man shades his eyes on the eastbound platform as the K4s blasts a string of Tuscan P54 coaches down the express track.

(Art Huneke photo)

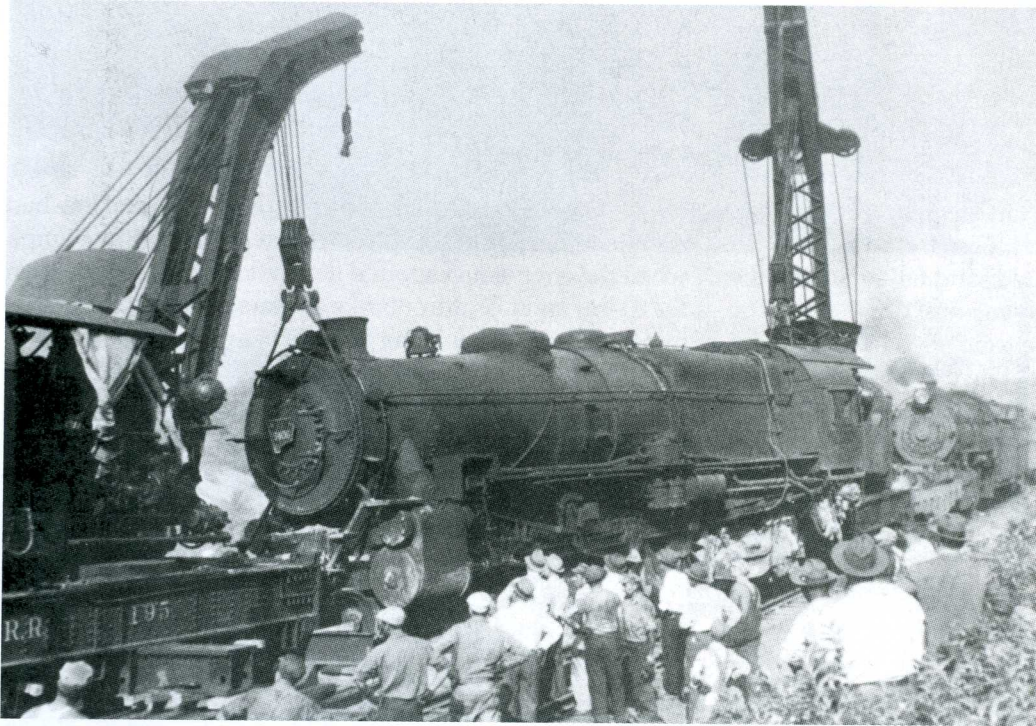
5406 waits for assignment ahead of an LIRR G5s, c.1945. The G5s pilot beams were never cut out for piston rod extensions as were the K4s's, but on LIRR they shared similar tenders. 5406 has been partially modernized, but retains its original style pilot. After the 1947 wreck at Kings Park, a solid drop-coupler pilot would replace it. *(Art Huneke collection)* ▼



◀ It's 1951, and Pacifics are going cold all over the Pennsy system. Here are two, led by 5406, on the Port Jefferson ready track. The LIRR characteristic black smokebox door still reigns, though FM units are about to bump these locomotives. *(Robert Emery photo; author's collection)*

K4s Pacifics hauled the heaviest of LIRR trains, which sometimes included a baggage car, an RPO, and a dozen P70 coaches. The run from Jamaica to the Hamptons and Montauk required reliable express power. Elsewhere, the K4s's held down evening commuter assignments on the more heavily populated Port Jefferson branch, particularly east of Syosset, where double tracks converged at "S" Cabin and the steep single-track grade leading to Cold Spring Harbor station began. At the end of their run, the locomotives were wyeed at "Port Jeff" and serviced prior to the return trip.

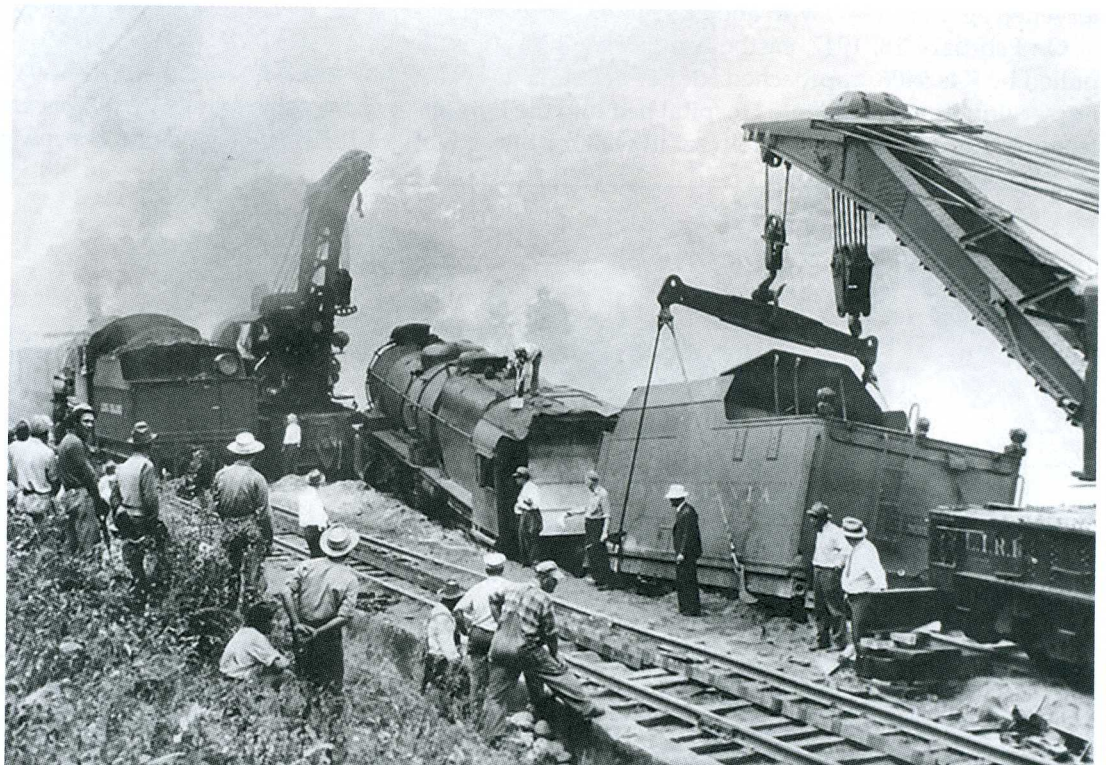
Long Island is glacial till in nature, much of it sandy particulates, well distributed for use in concrete. It was a natural resource for the railroad to excavate from trackside east of Syosset while constructing Jamaica station, in 1912. Many years later, on September 14, 1944, a Category 3 hurricane hit the East Coast and tore across Long Island, bringing heavy rain and downing trees. A speed restriction of 15 mph was ordered for trains coming down the hill from Port Jeff by this author's father, who was a civil engineer in the track department. However, another official, infuriated by the headaches this caused the movement bureau,



◀ East of Syosset wreck, in 1944. The first of two destructive wrecks for 5406, a slow order was pulled and a wash-out ensued. Extensive damage to the locomotive required a trip to Altoona. Within three years 5406 will again be on the ground when it hits an open switch at 40 mph. (The spur into the hospital had no turning facility, so the entrance and exit switches served as a wye for the shorter hospital trains. The switch that allowed the hospital train locomotive to reverse direction had been left open, directed into the hospital spur, by the hospital train crew.)

(Don Boslet photo; Ron Ziel collection)

▶ East of Syosset wreck of 1944. Its cab is boarded over, but cables will be run through the cab roof and under the smokebox to yank 5406 out of the wet sand. (Don Boslet photo)



5406 is mired in wet sand, while the tender remains partially on the roadbed. Its keystone number plate was snapped off as the smoke-box buried itself. Syosset's postmaster, Don Boslet, hiked in and took a series of wreck photos. (Don Hoslet photo)



pulled the slow order. Sometime after 10 p.m., LIRR Train 647, led by 5406, reached the area next to the excavation patch east of Syosset. The saturated sand failed to hold the ties and rails in place, and in the ensuing derailment, the heavy Pacific, its tender, and the train's lead coaches slid off, ending up buried in the glacial mixture. The 5406 lost its hen-coop pilot and headlight, and snapped its keystone number plate in half. Don Boslet, who lived nearby, grabbed his camera and photographed the wreck in detail. Sadly, the original negatives were later destroyed in a house fire, but not before Ron Ziel made prints for *Steel Rails to the Sunrise*, a history of the LIRR he wrote with George Foster.

Following the derailment, 5406 was sent to Altoona for heavy repairs. It returned to the LIRR with a high headlight and a traditional bar pilot.

One major calamity would be more than enough for most locomotives, but the 5406 was not so lucky. Fate intervened again in 1947, with another calamitous result.

On February 16, 1947, eastbound weekend Train 4612, pulled by K4s 5406, approached Kings Park station. A siding serving Kings Park State Hospital tied into the Port Jefferson main, and a hospital train sat in wait for the arrival

of the scheduled train. The switch for the hospital line had been inadvertently left open. 5406 was moving at 40 mph when the engineman spotted the switch target, but by then the 11-car train couldn't brake in time. The big Pacific bit into the roadbed, traveling 250 feet before coming to a stop, twisting rails and ending up almost directly under a huge community water tower. Nobody was killed, but the track required complete rebuilding, as did the K4s. (The hospital train departed on time. It had pulled out of the hospital siding and onto the track that fed into the main. It was waiting for the priority train to pass before moving up to the Kings Park station. 5406 hit a switch that had been left open, at over 40 mph. There was massive track damage, but behind the hospital train.)

Once again, the Pacific was off to Altoona for heavy repairs, returning with the full PRR "beauty treatment," which this time included a solid pilot and a main driver with web-spoked casting, an example of which can be seen on sister 3750, at the Railroad Museum of Pennsylvania.

LIRR historian Ron Zinn is certain that 5406 was on Long Island in 1935. It was also there in 1936. It was on LIRR during 1940, then appears to be off from 1941 until



Wreck at Kings Park, February 16, 1947. The Port Jefferson main is destroyed, but nobody was killed. At 40 mph, the heavy K4s traveled 250 feet before digging into the earth. (David Keller collection)

▶ Looking northeast at the Kings Park wreck. This is a good view of the backhead and broken connections between the 5406 and tender.

(De Biase photo; David Keller collection)



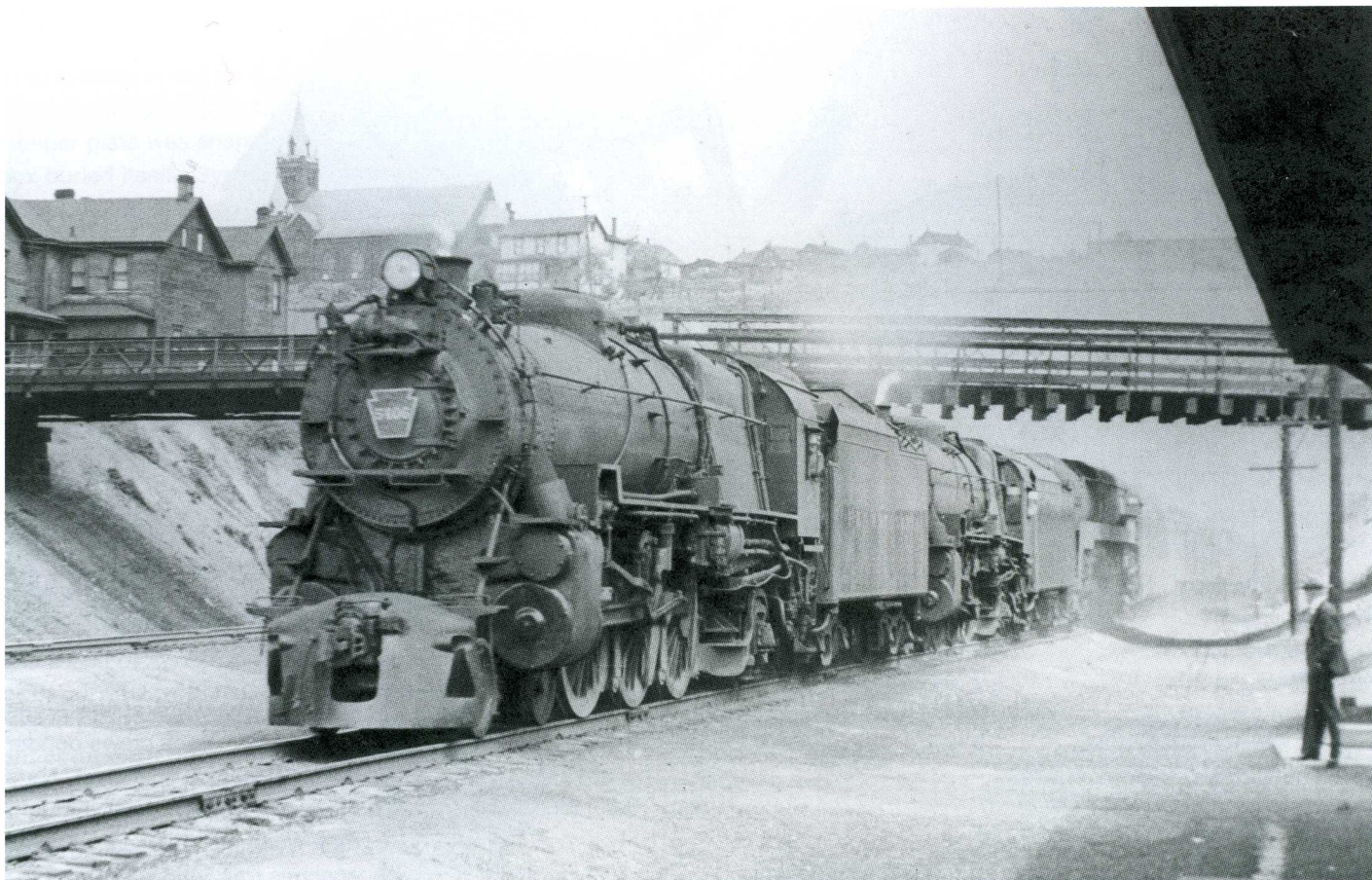
◀ Looking westward at the Kings Park wreck. Track crews ponder how to best pick up a giant. Note the water tower legs at the right that were just missed. Eleven coaches trail 5406.

(De Biase photo; David Keller collection)

▶ Putting 5406 right at Kings Park. Two cranes put the locomotive back on the tracks, before a small LIRR G-53 ten-wheeler would tow her back to the shops.

David Keller collection)





A dapper gentleman observes traffic from the platform as 5406 leads a second K4s and a T1 Duplex up from Gallitzen, in the late 1940s. (Frank Zahn Collection, Temple University)



NY&LB was the place to find the last of the breed still under steam. Destined to survive, sister 3750 stands in the background. 5406 would served an additional year. (Edward Ozog photo)

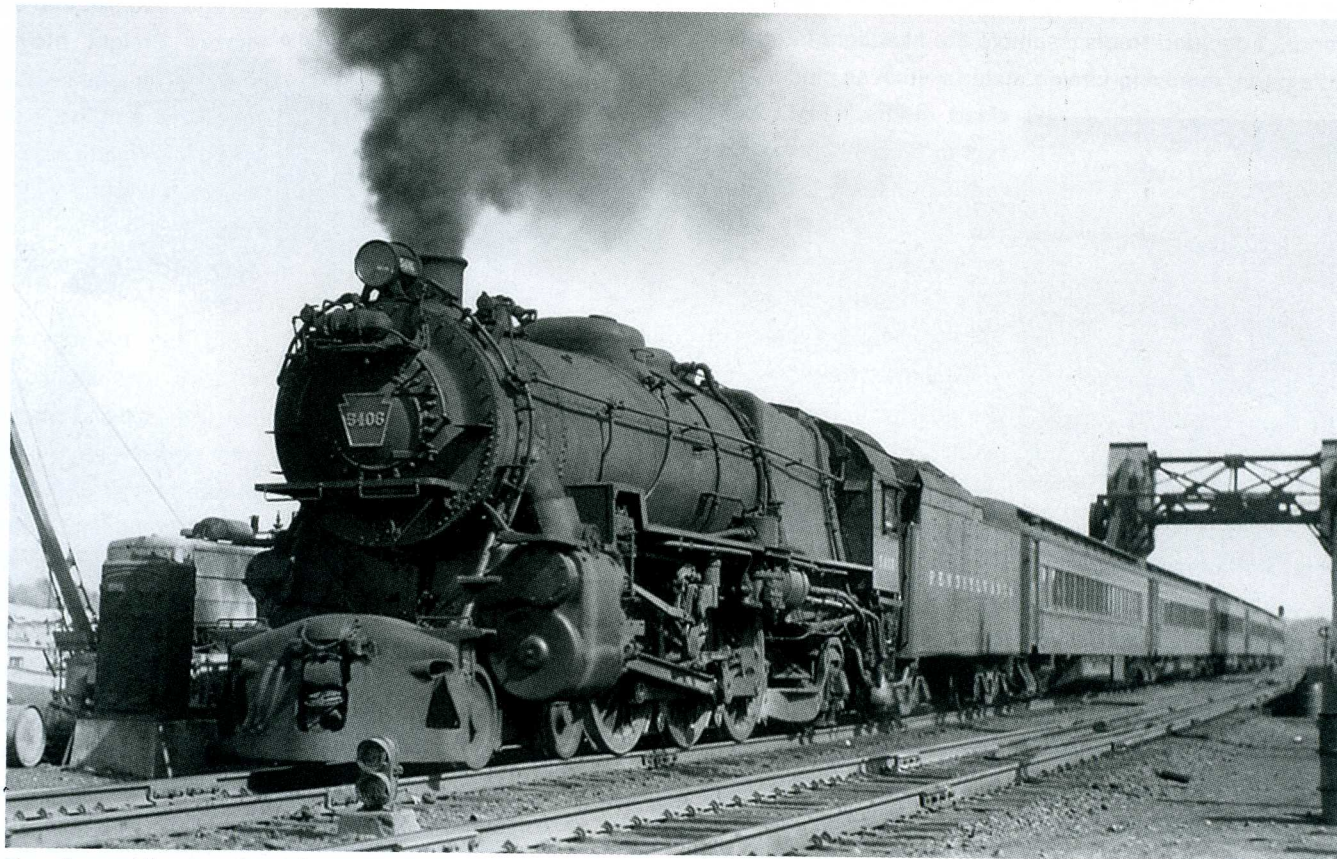
1944. It shows up once more as of April 1, 1944, and appears to remain through 1945. MP229 assignment sheets show it on LIRR in 1947 and 1948. An MP229 from 1949 does not show 5406, but it is back in 1950, and it looks like it remained on LIRR until the last three K4s's went back to Pennsy in November 1951.

While on LIRR, 5406 received automatic speed control. It continued in service until Pennsy began to retrieve its leased locomotives. Fairbanks-Morse C-Liners, heavy and favored by the parent road for LIRR's commuter service, replaced the K4s's. Long Island's "own K4s" was reassigned to the NY&LB. What had once been commonplace was now drawing photographers who wished to savor the steam era for as long as Pennsy allowed. Perhaps it was the 1947 shopping after the Kings Park wreck that put 5406 in an elite club of PRR's longest-lived passenger locomotives. It ran among Reading 4-6-2's and a handful of her sisters on the New Jersey shore until November 1957. When the fires were finally dropped, 5406 joined a line of cold 2-10-4's and 2-8-0's in East Altoona, where it was stripped of its "jewelry." The end came in February 1958, when 5406 was sold for scrap.

It appears this particular locomotive wore three styles of marker lights during its career, starting with the classic four-legged ones, then switching to "tombstones," and finishing with the bullseye style. LIRR distinctively "dolled up" their G5s fleet and leased PRR locomotives. Smokeboxes were coated in a graphite/linseed oil mix. The doors and radiating dogs were painted black. The distinctive red-and-gold keystone number plate in the center improved the

looks of any E6s, G5s, or K4s. 5406 was no exception. Many PRR locomotive went to scrap wearing their badge and number plates, but 5406 did not. A private collector on Long Island owns her keystone number plate, and her Baldwin builder's plates (c/n 59788) are probably gracing some other collections.

It was with no little excitement that I spotted her modern headlight on the floor of the Boothbay Railway Village museum in Maine back in the 1970s. I wrote several letters to the museum, asking if the headlight might be for sale, but I never received a response. This was not unexpected, as much of the museum display was the personal collection of the founder. Fast-forward to 2019, when the founder's and my paths crossed. I inquired again, relating the locomotive's connection to my father, and he said he'd ask the museum director for his opinion. In January 2020, Boothbay's director, Steve Markowitz, asked me if I had anything distinctly from a Maine railroad that I could trade for the headlight. I owned the semaphore signal that protected the Grand Trunk swing bridge in Portland. An exchange agreement was drawn up, and in June I drove to Boothbay and picked up the treasured artifact. Today it's in my home collection, exactly as it appeared in 1957, but safely indoors and well-loved. Someday, when I go to RIP track, I'll pass it on to a museum or established and secure collection. For right now, the headlight helps to tie me to my father's 1944 slow order, one of the most beautiful locomotives ever constructed, and the golden days of standardized steam railroading on the LIRR.



Running out its days in style, on the NY&LB. The Pacifics displayed their elegance in service from the teens through the mid-1950s. (Bud Laws photo)

TO RESTORE OR NOT TO RESTORE?

BY RICHARD GLUECK

All photos are courtesy of the author.



Author Richard Glueck with his 5406 headlight and best friend, Aurora.

Collectors often receive locomotive artifacts in worn or damaged condition, forcing them to decide if they should restore them or leave them as received. In the case of the 5406 headlight, I could not move it using muscle power alone. The intact headlight must weigh 250 pounds, if not more. I decided to disassemble the headlight into manageable parts, removing foreign material such as cinders and



Reflector glass detail.

dead moths. Eight bolts had to be removed to separate the back shell from the barrel. Each bolt had to be scraped clean of thick layers of paint to get a 9/16" socket over it. One bolt snapped at the stem, but the others cooperated with some strain. The shell was weatherproofed with a rubber gasket, and that pulled free with little persuasion. The 18"-wide shell was full of cinders and particulate rust, but was not painted inside. This exposed another bowl, this one holding the glass reflector, with measures 3-7/8" deep, and is held in place by a 15-3/4" steel ring. A little Windex and the reflector cleaned up like a mirror.

The barrel of the headlight is a single piece casting, measuring 19-1/8" exterior and 18-1/4" interior. No need to wonder why it's so heavy! The entire inside was brush painted a whitish/gray. There is a box measuring 3-1/2" x 4-3/4" cast into



Polished glass reflector, showing metal retaining ring.



Brass bayonet style ring to fit over threaded bulb, before inserting into the receptacle (shown).



Headlight barrel and interior.

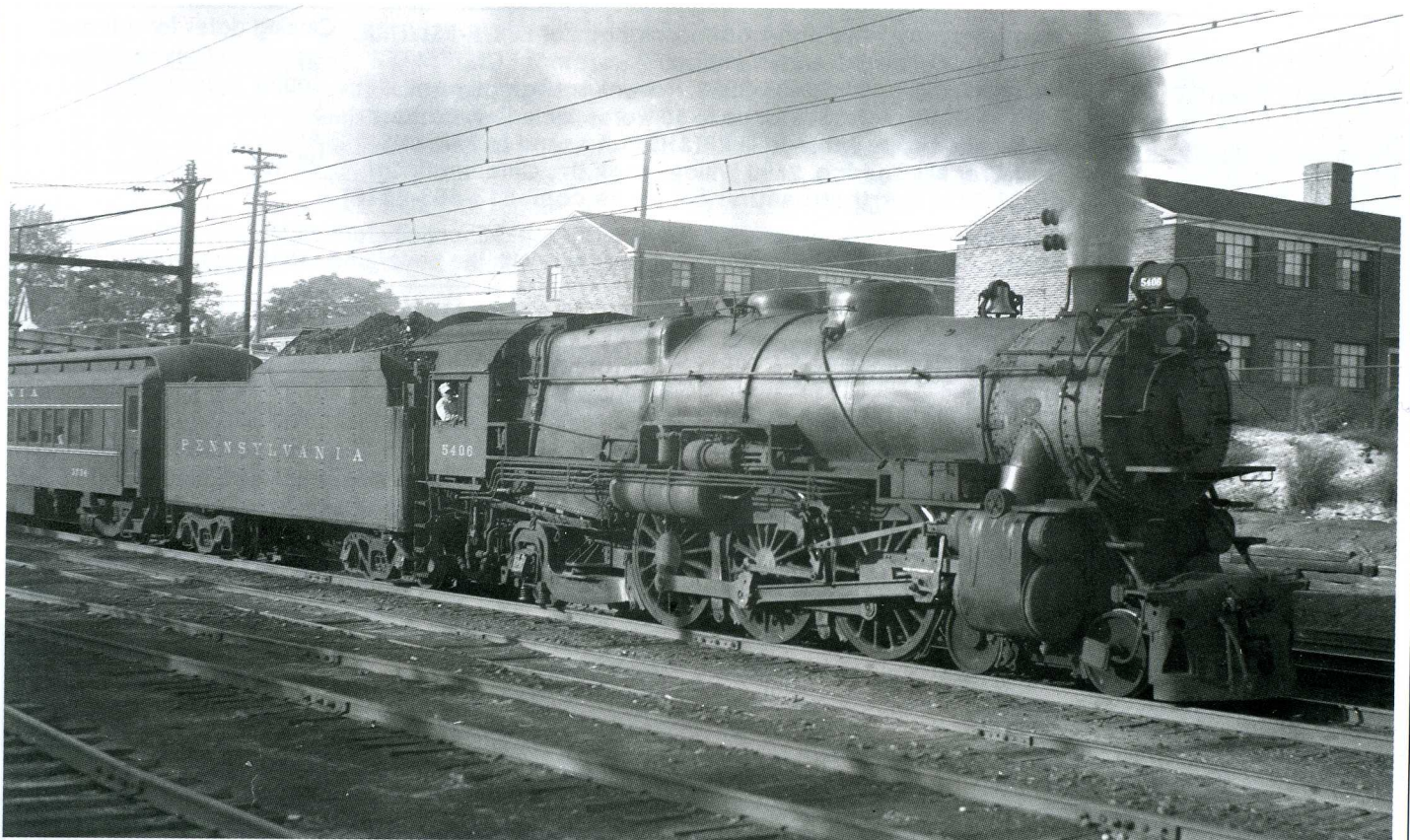


Headlight barrel interior with light gray paint, showing access port and spare bulb box.

the floor of the barrel, presumably to hold a spare bulb. The original 32-watt bulb was shattered, but while it had a conventional screw base, it fit into a brass bayonet style ring, which twist locked into the receptacle.

There is a five-inch diameter access port along the underside of the barrel, chained inside. I lubricated the threaded seam, but left it undisturbed. The side number boards measure 11-1/2" x 4-1/4". There is a white piece of translucent glass backing the numerals.

I bolted the headlight onto a piece of oak planking and mounted that on a Harbor Freight mover's dolly. The reassembled headlight can be easily rolled for dusting, and has a safe home next to my repainted M1 keystone plate (6862). I have decided not to strip the old paint from the headlight. Keeping the original finish, blistered and crackled as it is, brings me a little closer to the 5406 as it served in the final months of steam operations. Why repaint the number plate? The previous owner had been using it as a grease tray under his barbecue when he offered it to me.



Strolling out of South Amboy on a non-descript commuter run, c.1954. By this date, few of her Baldwin-built sisters retain hot fireboxes. 5406 will become a steam icon in the east before July of 1957, when its fires will be dropped, and it'll be towed cold to Altoona. (Author's collection)



5406 was retired at East Altoona in August 1957. Its drive rods in the tender, it awaits disposition among J1's, H10s's, and other K4s's. Its bell, headlight, keystone, and perhaps badge plates will be removed before being sold as scrap in February 1958. Note the web-spoked main driver. (Author's collection)

