



- THE HISTORY
- THE SOCIETY
- PRESERVATION
- GAHS STORE
- HOME

- LIRR SERVICE to:**
- Van Iderstine Co.
 - Shaw-Walker Co.
 - Bickfords and Peter F. Mallon
 - Eagle Electric #7
 - Extrin
 - Roto-Broil
 - Walworth Craftsman, Westinghouse
 - Slicklen Paper
 - Sternberger
 - National Casket
 - Brenner Paper
 - Louis Sherry
 - Speed Queen
 - American Steel Wool
 - Web Offset
 - Astoria Lumber
 - West Chemical
 - Blissville Yard
 - Jacobson & Son
 - Stoll Metal
 - Marlyn Warehouse
 - Yard A
 - Dutch Kills Lift Bridge
 - Carbona Products
 - Centre Lumber
- Back to Transportation

HISTORY TOPICS: TRANSPORTATION: LIRR



VOLUME 7: LONG ISLAND CITY'S WALWORTH CRAFTSMAN BUILDING OCCUPIED BY WESTINGHOUSE

By Nicholas Kalis

Seventh in a series of glimpses into industries or warehouses that made for interesting freight operations on the Long Island. Information presented has included, where available, a brief history of the firm, how it was served by the LIRR, and what commodities were received or shipped from this facility.

Maps of Freight Stations and Private Sidings published June 1966 places Westinghouse Corporation (Spot 14) immediately east of Queens Boulevard and west of Astoria Lumber. Bill Myers and the Hyde Atlas confirm this as the Walworth Company building whose sign reads "Walworth Craftsman." According to the Hyde Atlas, Queens Vol. 1, updated through 1955, this building, once known as **American Stove Company**, was incorporated by the Stockstroms in 1901. Prior to that, it housed **Magic Chef** from the 1930s to 1960s. Since the 1990s, this building has been occupied by **D.W.L. Industries**.



Water Tank, American Stove Company, Spot 14 Credit: Bill Myers

Magic Chef was founded in St. Louis in 1881 and became American Stove in 1901. During WW II American Stove devoted its entire facilities to wartime activity. These production efforts in the manufacture of aircraft assemblies, bomb casings, flares, shells, droppable fuel tanks, and many other items earned them many awards and other tokens of recognition, including the coveted Navy E. In the pre-war years, as well as during the war, American Stove had been a vital link in the nation's industrial might.

After the war American Stove Co. began a long decline. It was unable to compete with the larger manufacturers with a complete line of household appliances. Their facilities and expertise had been strictly in the field of gas stove manufacture, and attempts to expand their product lines with their own brands were unsuccessful. Even a company name change on December 31, 1951 to Magic Chef, Inc. did not help the slide from its former predominance in the gas stove industry. By 1953, as sales continued to fall, Arthur Stockstrom, then head of the company, brought in Cecil M. Dunn, former CEO of the Estate Division of RCA. Dunn announced that he had assumed leadership of the company and was ready to restore it to its former position as a leader in the gas stove industry. He thereupon proceeded to systematically dismantle the tangible assets of the company, the huge factory in St. Louis, the Lorain plant in Ohio, warehouses, and the practically new \$1 million corporate headquarters in St. Louis. Millions of dollars worth of machinery was cut up and sold for junk. Tons and tons of new replacement parts and valuable equipment was sold for scrap prices. In 1955 Dunn purchased the Dortch Stove works in Franklin, Tenn. and transferred what assets remained of Magic Chef. In 1957, Dunn merged the company into the Food Giant Markets of California, but that move was doomed to failure and by October 1, 1958 what little was left of Magic Chef, primarily the Magic Chef name which was still virtually a household name, was sold to Dixie Products, Inc., a stove manufacturer of Cleveland, Tenn., for \$1 million.



Exterior Detail, American Stove Company (a prior tenant for the building under review here) aka Walworth Building/ Magic Chef/D.W.L. Industries, Credit: Bill Myers

Over the next 29 years the Magic Chef name was substantially restored by the former Dixie Products management. In May of 1986 Magic Chef had been listed by Fortune Magazine as the 249th industrial concern and was merged as a division of Maytag Corp.

The Walworth building clearly extended through to Northern Boulevard. According to telephone directories, a Westinghouse Battery Distributors was at 32-10 Northern Boulevard. However, a Westinghouse Elec Supply Co was listed as 29-50 Northern Boulevard in the 1950s -1970s. Also note that two buildings - not counting a building assumed to be an auxiliary structure for Astoria Lumber itself - not served by the LIRR separate Westinghouse from Astoria Lumber (Spot 15). Ron Ziel's black and white Photo 4 shows Magic Chef with a skeletal roof sign reading "Magic Chef" (script) with below "Gas -[unintelligible]". Across the top of this building is a painted sign [white letters on a dark background] that reads "American Stove Co." A photograph dated 1974 shows the word "Ranges" painted in light colors over a dark background running down the west side of the building. The former Westinghouse building can be identified by a roof-top sign skeleton and single odd-shaped (two-part) water tower (See Photo 2). A brick chimney is at the rear (from yard A) left of the building. Also apparent are two roof structures with pyramidal roofs. Both Carl Fabrizio and the Hyde Atlas confirm a siding running into the west side of the building that once housed Magic Chef. Westinghouse was housed in a 5 and 1/2 -story poured concrete structure. A one and one-half story first floor (reflective of an extra row of half-height windows) where freight cars enter causes this odd floor count.



American Stove Company (a prior tenant for the building under review here), while not appearing in this photograph, is identified in the left background. Credit: The LaGuardia and Wagner Archives, LaGuardia Community College/The City University of New York

George Westinghouse the man was born in 1846 in Central Bridge, New York and died in 1914. Can any reader confirm, controvert, or narrow down my guess that gas stoves and ranges were distributed from this facility? Can anyone confirm my guess that this facility saw only deliveries in box cars? A good guess would be that this building served only as a warehouse, with no manufacturing involved. In that case, it is likely this building only accepted rail deliveries of manufactured items, and shipped out only empties.



Westinghouse bought CBS in late 1995 for \$5.4 billion.

MODELING

I have built a foam core mock-up of this building in HO scale for my model railroad which depicts the Long Island Railroad as it operated in Queens, New York in 1963.

CREDITS

Thanks to Carl Fabrizio and Bill Myers

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Author Unknown *Maps of Freight Stations and Private Sidings* (Reprint) June 1966

Please send photographs that show how Extrin appeared in the 1960s and direct any comments on or corrections to this manuscript to:

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Any illustrations or maps contributed will be gratefully acknowledged.

GAHS STORE

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Images

Merchandise



Logo, Long Island Railroad

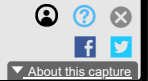
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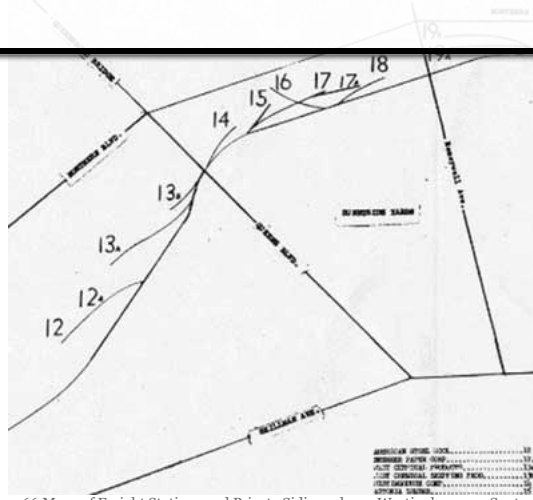
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About this capture



1966 Maps of Freight Stations and Private Sidings shows Westinghouse as Spot 14.

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