



# SEMAPHORE



EXTRA SECTION

September 8, 2010

Special Commemorative Issue Celebrating  
the 100th Anniversary of the completion of  
Pennsylvania Station, New York



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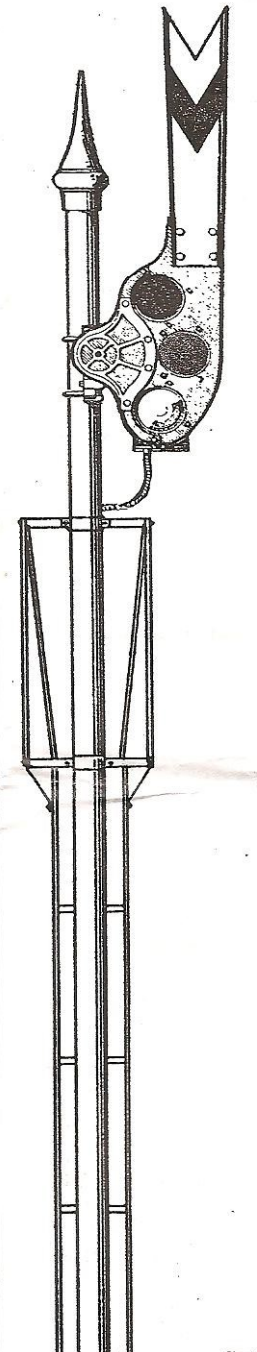
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## Penn Station at 100 Years by Bob Sturm

The original concepts underlying Penn Station date back to the early 1890's. A leader in the drive to gain access to Manhattan and the port facilities of New York harbor was Austin Corbin, President of the Long Island Rail Road. His concept was to provide direct access to the commercial district of lower Manhattan and to the continental rail network, first via the CNJ and later via the PRR.

Each of the major carriers (Erie, DL & W, LV, PRR, B&O and CNJ) were independently exploring concepts and routes of their own. Various terminal locations were studied, along with bridge types and tunneling techniques. The major hurdle was not the engineering and construction capabilities, but rather the enormous capital costs required; the individual carriers could not attract enough investment capital to go it alone.

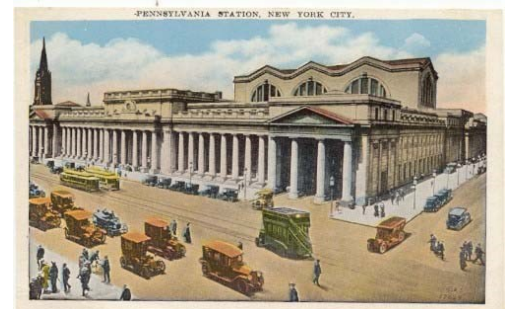
The PRR finally decided to proceed with a plan to go forward and approached the other railroads to construct a crossing and terminal to be used in common. Lengthy negotiations went nowhere. Meanwhile, railroads in Britain and France were employing electric traction. This mode of power suggested tunneling as a more viable method to gain access to Manhattan.

At the same time, the PRR felt the need to compete with the New York Central in terms of accessing New England and Canada and to provide freight service to and from the large manufacturing areas that were expanding in Brooklyn and Long Island City. The PRR combined the two concepts and decided to proceed independently with a project modestly named "The New York Tunnel Extension". As modest as it sounds, the project included:

- Four tunnels under the North (Hudson) River
- A terminal station complex encompassing 28 acres
- An intermediate station at 33<sup>rd</sup> street and Fourth Avenue
- Six tunnels beneath the East River
- A 208 acre passenger storage yard (Sunnyside)
- A freight tunnel between Greenville, N.J. and Bayridge
- The New York Connecting Railroad and Hellgate bridge complex
- An electric generating system to provide power to the terminal, tunnels, and LIRR electrification
- A new rail connection between the LIRR mainline and Glendale
- A system of piers along Newtown Creek to facilitate intermodal freight handling

Obviously, all the planned improvements were never built!

(In this writer's opinion, these criticisms were valid.)



## Penn Station at 100 Years by Bob Sturm...continued

First publicly announced in 1901, the project opened in stages in 1910, with LIRR inaugurating service on September 8 of that year. Critics of the day bemoaned three aspects of the project:

It was located too far west, Herald Square being considered more suitable.

The depth of track level and the means of access to the platforms was confusing.

There were insignificant space allowances for suburban and commuter traffic.

Some of the amenities included in the terminal were a fully staffed medical facility, a segregated waiting room for mourners, a YMCA and a suite of offices for railroad executives, including those of the LIRR. Formal and informal restaurants were placed in an arcade of upscale shops.

The terminal and its approaches have served well over the years, in spite of the steady shift in traffic patterns from long intercity trains (which often operated in multi-sections) to ever increasing numbers of commuters whose trains are operated in peak hours. Concourse areas for suburban riders have been greatly expanded, and vertical access has been added to improve pedestrian movement.

In addition to increase in suburban and commuter traffic, Amtrak Acela service has recaptured a significant number of riders from airline shuttle flights to Washington and Boston.

All things considered, Penn Station has served the traveling public well in the last 100 years. It has always operated at its train movement capacity, and the terminal facilities have been expanded, improved and air conditioned to meet the needs and expectations of today's travelers. That's not too bad for a facility that was conceived and designed in c1900.



## Saving Grace by John Turkeli

As we look back at the rich history of the past 100 years of Pennsylvania station, we still wonder how such an incredible masterpiece could be destroyed. Pennsylvania Station was built with private money and that same company that created and built it had the right to destroy it. After the protesters had left and the media had covered the start of the demolition of Penn in October, 1963 the PRR made plans to save some of the magnificent artwork in and around the station.

The big news was that the PRR was considering a request to save the entire 7<sup>th</sup> avenue colonnade and relocate it downtown to Battery Park. The 7<sup>th</sup> avenue façade was the last section of the station to be demolished and with good reason — the PRR needed a place to hang their banner touting the New Madison Square Garden and their “new and improved” Pennsylvania Station! This proved to be a very costly move and it was much easier to just toss the colonnade into the Secaucus Meadows next to the High Line. This is the section of track running through the meadows that was built from material excavated from the station site during construction. Until recently, two of the column drums from the façade were seen guarding the driveway to National Retail Transport—the company that leases the site of the infamous Penn burial grounds. At last glance they have disappeared, never to be seen again.

The bronzes, reliefs and statuary that graced the station were all designed and sculpted by Adolph Alexander Weinman. Weinman, a Cooper Union graduate, also gave us the incredible Walking Liberty half-dollar and the Mercury dime designs. Most of Pennsylvania Station’s art work has enjoyed a fairly decent survival rate.

For the eagles and statuary, Weinman would first sculpt his work out of clay to create a master that would then be carved into pink Tennessee marble. This is the same material used for the floors at Penn and Grand Central Terminal. The most noticeable carvings of this material besides the two Eagles at the MSG/Penn plaza on Seventh Avenue are the Lions guarding the New York Public Library. Thumb through Lorraine Diehl’s masterpiece, “The Late Great Pennsylvania Station” for a photo of Weinman’s clay master of the statuary. This book is also required reading for those who wish to read the story of Penn!

All 14 of Weinman’s larger, 5,700 pound birds were gifted to various groups and individuals across the east coast. The railroad chose to donate the eagles based upon whether or not they would be viewable by the general public. Most of us have seen the two eagles that grace the 7<sup>th</sup> avenue plaza in front of the Garden. Unfortunately the railroad never added a memorial plaque explaining their significance. More than likely the PRR did not identify the eagles out of shame for tearing down the very building that they graced!

We also treasure Long Island’s most prominently displayed Penn Station artifact—the Hicksville Eagle which resides at the LIRR railroad station proper. Donated to the Hicksville High School Latin club in 1965, this eagle has been rededicated in 1990 and has recently undergone a major cleaning and restoration to repair a broken beak. We can thank Nassau County, the Long Island Sunrise Trail Chapter of the NRHS, the Hicksville Historical Society and the Northwest Civic Association for their generous donations. As of the writing of this article, the eagle needs some minor work to complete the restoration however she is still a beautiful sight to behold! A rededication may be in the offing in the fall of this year.

## Saving Grace by John Turkeli...continued

Other prominent Pennsylvania Station eagles reside in the following locations:

2 at the US Merchant Marine Academy in King's Point, NY

1 near the Cooper Union in Manhattan

4 on the Market Street bridge in Philadelphia

Valley Forge Military Academy honoring it's Vietnam Soldiers in Wayne, PA

Vinalhaven Maine

Yank's Corner at Hampden-Sydney College in Virginia

National Zoologic Park in Washington D.C.

Weinman's seductive statuary faired differently with the most complete set existing in Kansas City, Missouri. Here the women and eagles offer a tribute to the Boy Scouts of America who coincidentally are sharing their 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary as well!

Until recently there was also a complete set of maidens in the Ringwood Manor in New Jersey. This set has been stored in a warehouse and is protected from the elements. Supposedly they will be returned to New York to be displayed



Original Statuary of Day and Night at Kansas City, Missouri. Photo courtesy of Dave Morrison

at the "New" Pennsylvania Station at the Farley building across from Madison Square Garden. As for now, their fate is unknown as is the fate of the Farley/Moynihan Transportation Center at the site of the Post Office opposite the Garden.

The most visible of maidens resides in the sculpture garden of the Brooklyn Museum, also a McKim, Mead and White designed edifice. Here the statue of "Night" stands alone in the garden without her beautiful sister to help represent "Day". She stands quietly with her eyes closed, half-naked clasping a poppy flower in one hand. The railroad also gave the museum a relief from the façade of the building however, this has cracked in half. There is also a small column base and cap from the interior of the building most likely from the main waiting room or the entrance to it from the arcade.

## Saving Grace by John Turkeli...continued

In the year 2000, Columbia University Professor Hilary Ballon had organized an exhibit on Penn that coincided with the release of her magnificent book, "New York's Pennsylvania Station's". Ballon had asked the public to lend Penn artifacts to the exhibit. She received a call from a businessman from the Bronx who said that he saw a picture of the now infamous photo of the top half of "DAY" laying helplessly in the Secaucus Meadows. He explained to Hillary that something that resembled this sculpture turned up in his concrete recycling plant. Sure enough he had probably saved this very maiden from permanent destruction and graciously loaned her to Columbia for the exhibit. Here she was appropriately displayed in front of Charles Follen McKim's low library. He was McKim Mead and White's partner responsible for Pennsylvania Station.

Weidman's bronzes are truly a magnificent sight with both of them visible on the east coast. Alexander Cassatt, president of the PRR and brother of Impressionist painter Mary, had his image molded in clay and cast in bronze for the dedication ceremony of the opening of Penn in August of 1910. Cassatt had fallen ill and had died before he could see the crowning jewel –the station–on top of his engineering vision–the tunnels under the two rivers. Weinman was able to create the statue of Cassatt for a mere \$12,000.00 according to his contract in 1908. I would hate to think of the price today if the statue was offered for auction by Sotheby's!

Cassatt's 8' 6" statue was given by the railroad to his alma mater–Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute where he graduated in the Class of 1859. His likeness resided there for many years until it was donated to the Railroad Museum of Pennsylvania in Strasburg a fitting place where he is surrounded by some of the surviving equipment from his road.

The bronze that New Yorker's are familiar with is that of Sam Rea, Cassatt's right hand man and Vice President in charge of the tunneling project. A stroll past the main entrance to Penn on 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue will lead you to his incredible likeness. Sam Rea served as president of the PRR from 1913 until his death in 1929. The PRR recognized Rea's significant contributions to both the Railroad and to the Penn Station project and commissioned Weinman to create a tribute in bronze. Rea's statue resided in the original Pennsylvania Station (across from Cassatt's statue) from 1930 until the station's demise. Now he faithfully guards the plaza at the site of the center of Penn Stations arcade of shops with the mighty Hell Gate Bridge sweeping behind him.

I still wonder about the PRR saving each one of what it considered successful steam locomotives while disposing its station in New York. Meanwhile it's crosstown rival New York Central Railroad did just the opposite by leaving its magnificent beaux-arts Grand Central Terminal relatively intact but completely destroying its world famous class J Hudson and class S Niagara steam locomotives. I would gladly trade some of the rusting PRR steamers for our beloved Pennsylvania Station! At least we still have some of the station's treasure to enjoy thanks to the PRR.



## Penn Station Hicksville Eagle by Dave Morrison

Sculptor Steve Tatti, his son Zack Tatti and Steve Johnson pose in front of the long beakless Penn Station eagle at the Hicksville train station.



On July 26th the eagle was cleaned (spray washed) by Sculptor Steve Tatti,

The now cleaned and restored eagle poses proudly in gleaming sunlight.



**Railroad & Railfan Magazine** will be publishing an article, due out in their November issue, on the Penn Station and Grand Central Station eagles. This article authored by Dave Morrison is sure to be very interesting.

Be sure to watch the news stands for your copy!

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# **ATTENDING MEETING AT OLD TOWN HALL BABYLON VILLAGE**

**FRIDAY, MAY 21ST, 2010**



**LONG ISLAND-  
SUNRISE TRAIL  
CHAPTER**



**NATIONAL RAILWAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY**