

"K" cards and "clearances" if the train was going beyond Patchogue. Since this was a "holiday night" Walter was a little less busy than he would be on a weekday second shift! In 1950 the RR placed a crossing watchman in the tower to raise and lower the gates on first and second track.

On New Years Day of 1949 I received "greetings" from the crew dispatcher in the form of a telephone call, telling me I was trimmed out of "Port" for the next day. I had been displaced by a "freight man" whose run had been annuled for the holiday. This was a favorite tactic used by men from "freight" who wanted to get into passenger service for the winter to keep warm and dry. When better weather returned in the spring the man would bid a "freight run" again. Since there was no one junior to me working out of "Port", Ronkonkoma or Speonk I had to "trim" a younger man in Patchogue.

The new run was three round trips between Patchogue and Babylon on the "Scoot", with the first trip leaving "PD" at two five p.m. on train 57. Parking my "38" Ford by the brick baggage house in Patchogue a



**Patchogue Baggage House
View E - 1947
(Weber-Keller)**

couple of days later, I spotted my train opposite the depot on the north siding. Much to my surprise was the RPO "balloon roof" no. 738, a car which had been on N.Y.-Greenport trains 205 and 214 for as long as I could remember!

To provide heat for the "steam" RPO cars while being hauled by MU trains, Railway Post Office cars nos. 737-741 inc., all had four point jumpers to provide electric heat, besides a twelve point jumper for the "electric-brake feature" when being hauled in an MU train. After Robert Carlough the flagman and I turned the three cars of seats I walked up to the head car to wait for our engine to back down from the ashpit.

Soon an E6 with it's low tender appeared thru the gently falling snow. It turned out to be no. 230 and George Sephton was the hogger. When making a hitch, (coupling), with him you tried to make sure the "pins" fell on the first attempt. If you had to try a second or third time it meant George, who was a short man, had to stand up each time to crank the "screw type" reverse wheel. That usually got him to say a "few choice words" about stupid brakemen!

One feature an E6 had I liked especially was that the engine & tender brakes did not "dump", (go in the big hole), if you were too fast turning the angle cock on the rear of the tender, when you cut the air into the trainline. Not so with G5s or K4s, you had to cut the air in gently or they would "dump" very easily!

After arriving at Babylon sta., we backed down the "lead track" to the yard and took water, and usually the yardmaster would line us up for the WYE.

Going east on train 60 I had plenty of heavy sacks of mail to throw off that had been transferred from our connection, train 134. One thing I'll say about the LIRR "balloon roof" express and RPO cars; they rode much better than their PRR cousins did with their "tender type" trucks. The PRR "balloon roof" cars bounced an awful lot!

R.E. Harrington was my conductor, a fine gentleman to work with. He had been a First Lieutenant in World War Two and his father was a prominent PRR lawyer, one that was always listed in the "Official Guide". I would get to work many times in the coming years with "Dick". The next trip west on train 63 we dropped our RPO in Babylon yard for MU train 167 to forward to Penn. Sta. on it's rear. Then we turned the train on the wye and backed the three "pings" to the sta. for train 70, the heaviest train "passenger-wise" on the job. The last round trip on 69 and 44 was a "sweetheart" with hardly any people usually.

A couple of random thoughts on the Montauk Branch now that we have put train 44 on track one for the night and the F6 is on the "pit". Was the Bayport curve the most heavily banked on the RR? It surely felt that way to me as going over it at a moderate rate of speed, the "lean" of a coach was very noticeable. Another place where the "lean" was always noticed was at Peconic Road crossing west of the former Shinnecock Hills sta., but that was only a "short" curve in length.

What was it about the Montauk Branch that was so "different" than the rest of the RR? Perhaps the wide spread use of PRR locomotives except for Speonk trains made it that way. There was also the use of Pullman and PRR passenger equipment on most Montauk trains too. For me as a "railfan" before working on the LIRR a visit to Patchogue was the "highlight" of a trip over to the south shore from "Port"! There was always another "E6 or K4" you had never seen before as a "suprise", along



Patchogue Yard c.1920 Archive: John Jett

with "PD" tower, the large layout of the yard, many trains and best of all, many grade crossings that called for much "whistle music". Port Jefferson was a poor second to Patchogue in those respects!

The Saturday job was easier than Monday to Friday in that we did not make the "middle" round trip. Perfect to enjoy the afternoon matinee at the nearby Rivoli "movie" just up S. Ocean Ave. from the RR, as we had three hours "swing". I stayed on the Patchogue job until February fifth.

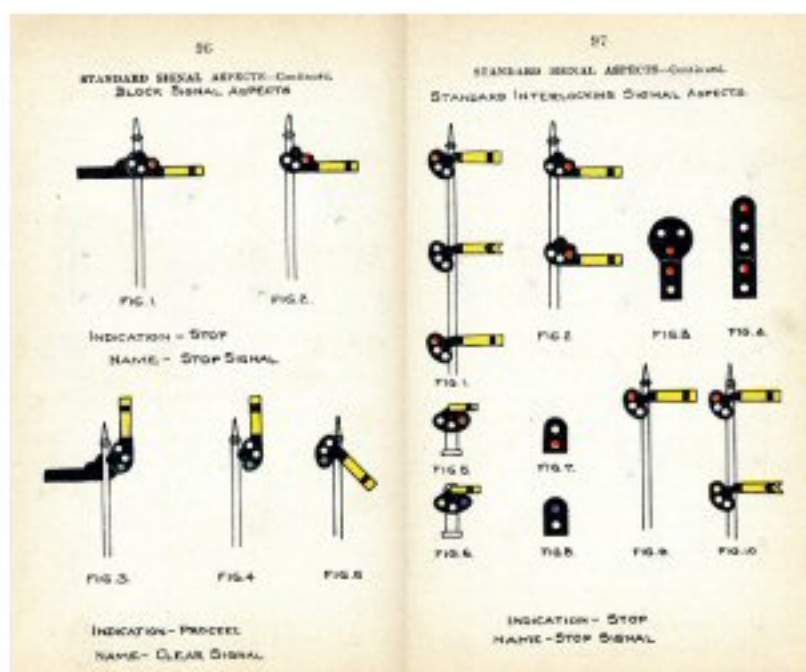
The very next day I married a girl from "Port" and took the rest of the month off so we could drive to Key West, Fla. for our honeymoon. Returning in early March I was able to "trim" a younger man in seniority on an afternoon run out of "Port". A "home job" once again!

It was an afternoon job, leaving at two thirty nine, on train 631, a round trip to the "Bay" on nos. 548 and 555 and finishing up in "Port" about ten p.m. six days a week. Even though no. 631 only consisted of four "mainliner" coaches, most days we rated a Pennsy K4. It was no. 1139 quite a few times. This engine had a keystone number plate made of wood at the time, I know as I climbed up on the pilot to "tap" on it. Evidently some time ago the metal keystone had been broken in some way and this was the "substitute" until another metal one could be cast at Altoona Shops.

No. 1139 of course had had the ugly "facelift" along with the cast "solid pilot" and the retractible coupler. One problem we never had in "Port" was raising those heavy couplers in order to switch our train. The Greenport crews were always having trouble with them, especially when they became packed with hard snow as a result of "bucking the drifts" going east thru the "cuts" from Calverton on out..

The "practise" in Greenport was to run the engine around the train on arrival, and then do your switching with the engine still headed "east". Engines were not turned until the train was disposed of. In "Port", Speonk and Montauk the train could be laying between the legs of the wye while the engine was turned depending on the number of cars on it, so raising the coupler on the pilot was unnecessary.

May twelfth, nineteen forty nine came all too quickly and the all day examination by Mr. Arnold, the rules examiner, to see if we would become conductors found about ten of us sitting in a circle with Mr. Arnold on the third floor of Jamaica sta. We were answering all his questions on the book of rules, including types of train orders, physical characteristics of the entire RR and of course the correct interpretation of the various signals then in use.



**Book of Rules - 1926
Semaphore Signal Aspects**

For the signal test he had a large machine with all the different types of signals (in what might be "standard gauge scale" if they were on a model railroad) mounted on top of it. All the semaphore arms and "smash boards" could be moved by him to indicate any indication wanted, along with the changing of position light signal "lights" and the color light types used in tunnels or ^{on} the Long Beach and Bay Ridge Branches. It was really a neat and very practical idea!

Most everyone got thru the book of rules and signals to his satisfaction, but when it came to the characteristics it was "slow going".

Especially this was true out "east" of Ronkonkoma and Patchogue where few if any of us could ever hit a job with our seniority. Being born and raised in "single iron country", I always thought that was the easiest part, compared to, say the Bay Ridge Branch for instance, which I

was "weak" on. However I did "take" Mr. Arnold without many mistakes from L.I. City via the Montauk Branch to Babylon and I could tell he was pleased. By the end of the day we "all made it" and he signed our cards to make it "official" that we were now qualified LIRR conductors. This did not include PRR trackage from "F" and "Harold" towers into Penn. Sta. or the loop



**F Tower (PRR) 1925
Thompson Ave, LI City
(Osborne-Keller)**

tracks into Sunnyside and the yard itself, all of which were PRR territory.

None of us were in any hurry to rush into Penn. Sta. and "walk around" the station tracks and yards there with a Pennsy Rules Instructor. This would have to be done to learn all the signal and tower locations before we could become "qualified in New York" as they put it. Being as the "summer timetable" was almost upon us we would be making a foolish move to qualify in N.Y.. After the jobs were all picked for the summer, all the "miserable" all night runs that nobody wanted would be assigned to the youngest conductors, meaning us! Since covering those runs was the LIRR's problem, the Pennsy was in no rush to qualify us in their territory.

The railroad was indeed changing from the way it had been more or less since the thirties. Late 1948 and ^{EARLY} 1949 deliveries of brand new Alco diesels



S1 #405 LI City



**S2 #448 Freight Hicksville
1950 - Archive: Dave Keller**

of "S1 and S2" types were eating heavily into what had been "steam" yard switching jobs, as well as road freight runs on the "west end" of the RR. Already there were lines of stored C51 and H6sb types that would ^{NOT} run again. Some H10s were layed up as well, namely the ones with nose "snow plows".

Next to "steam locomotives", the thing I always enjoyed seeing around the RR were the many semaphores. These too were now giving way more frequently to the duller, but more efficient "position-light types". When I started in 1943 there had been nearly eight pairs of "lower quadrant type" semaphores on the Montauk Br. west of Jamaica, as well as four or five between Gibson and Far Rockaway on that branch. Many of the "upper quadrant type" were still around on the North Side Br., Rockaway Park Br., Hempstead Br. and even the Atlantic Br. east of Jamaica, but they also were fast disappearing.

The first "Grumman Air Show" on Sunday June the fifth was nicely handled by the RR with Special trains direct from Penn. Sta. to Grumman sta.. Luckily I was able to be "marked up" one one of the "Specials". Picking up our DDI on the west end of platform "C" at Jamaica, we ran "lite" to the L.I. City passenger yard where eight non-air conditioned PRR P70 coaches were waiting for us. There were no car inspectors at the yard on Sundays so we coupled up and gave the required brake test. We also had to throw all our own switches, again no switch tenders on Sundays.

We used the Main Line to "F" tower, backing our train thru the East River tunnels into Penn. Sta. from there. We loaded on track fifteen or sixteen, which are the tracks most used for LIRR "special movements" including "Race Track Trains"

Leaving Penn Sta. about eleven thirty a.m. we had a very "comfortable" load of city families looking forward to an exciting day at Grumman's big airfield adjacent to our main line tracks at South Oyster Bay Road crossing.



**Grumman Station
View W - 8/1943
(Weber-Morrison)**

We came into Jamaica Sta. on rarely used track five, swapping our DD1 for G5 29 here. We then ran non-stop to Grumman sta. where all detrained. Continuing to "PW" we turned on the wye there and then came west to "B" tower. "B" backed us into the Central Br. to lay up until the show was over. Going back we left our PRR coaches in New York, deadheading on the DD1 back to Jamaica on what had been a very enjoyable day on the RR. Other Specials to Grumman that day left from Jamaica, and at least two of them had Alco "RS-1s", (diesels), for power!

Automatic crossing gates, first put in use on the RR in 1941 at Bay Shore, were now being installed at various places displacing the long manual gates raised and lowered by the ever watchful crossing watchmen.



**Little Neck substation
LIRR valuation 10/25/1918
Archive: Dave Morrison**

More sub stations were built on the different branches and main line to boost third rail voltage for the brand new "double-decker fleet" now all in service. These cars all had air-conditioning which used more electricity than the tried and true MP54 fleet. "Centralized door control" was being installed as fast as the RR could on most of the MP54 cars. This feature enabled one person, (usually the conductor), to open and close all vestibule side doors with one turn of his key. We were all issued a new brass key for this and it was soon nicknamed a "dream key" by the men.

In July I was awarded a "day" ticket collectors run out of "Port", something I never expected to get with my meager seniority. Leaving at nine a.m. for Jamaica on train 625, I didn't have to get up "before the chickens" as they say. My next train was Babylon-bound no. 158 leaving Flatbush Ave, sta. at five ten p.m.. This was non-stop from East New York to St. Albans, bypassing Jamaica on the eastbound "Brooklyn Freight Track". My last train, no. 654, was headed by a PRR K4 and had fourteen "mainliner" coaches and "highballed" to Hicksville, the first stop. Arriving at "Port" around seven forty five, it felt good to be done in "daylight" once again!

One hot summer morning no. 625 consisted of "modern" PRR P70 coaches, a real surprise, since they never came up the Port Jeff. Br! These cars were the "rounded-roof" type with wide windows, and a vestibule at one end ONLY. The interiors had high-back reclining seats and big round mirrors in the end bulkheads. Unfortunately the air-conditioning was not the best, as the many station stops didn't allow the electro-mechanical "AC" to build up enough current via the belt on the axle to operate properly.

Since the job was off Sundays and I didn't rate "off", I had to drive to Babylon and work a ticket collectors run in the afternoon. Older men from the "west end" of the RR were working all the runs in the terminals in Suffolk County as some of them had summer homes there. They spent summer weekends with their families in them and since they didn't rate "off" as well, they worked the jobs close by.

My first train, no. 4089, leaving at four twenty three p.m. received a Patchogue "scoot" connection, train 4049. During the entire summer that train never seemed to rate a Pennsy E6. There were G5s, and one Sunday a real surprise! Pennsy class H9 no. 2826, ("facelift" and all), came proudly in to the platform with the four "pings". Towards the end of August there were more "surprises" in the form of Alco diesel 465 an "RS-1" type on our



**RS-1 #464 6/05/1949
Republic Station
(Votava-Boland)**

connection. During summer Sundays I had been seeing those Alco diesels on Oyster Bay Br. trains once in awhile also. That all black with "gold" nos. and lettering on those RS-1s was a pleasing combination, too bad it would be soon replaced by "the new grey scheme"!

There were still two Pennsy E6s in Patchogue, but with the "dieselization" of Patchogue terminal effective with the "timetable change" of September eleventh, 1949, the two remaining, (nos. 645 and 1694), would go back to the PRR. Probably at about the same time, any remaining PRR H9s also left for the "Jersey side of the Hudson". Only a dozen or so PRR K4s would remain on the LIRR for another two years to close out the era of "Pennsy Power" on the LIRR.

Two Alco diesels of the "RS-1" type handled all Patchogue "scoot" runs after Sept. eleventh, with an Alco S-2 diesel working the Patchogue Freight.



**Railroad Ave view West 05/1943
Photo: F. Weber, Archive: Dave Keller**

No. time was lost after "dieselization" of Patchogue in demolishing the coal hoist, water plugs and water tank, plus the "engine crossover" between Railroad and West Aves. was removed. "Patchogue at least for me was just not "the same" with all these rapid changes"!

Soon after Labor Day was over, we rode the B&O to Chicago to attend the "Chicago Railroad Fair". Compared to the New York Worlds Fair exhibit of "Railroads on Parade" of 1939 and 1940, it was a poor second I thought. Coming east we left out of Chicago's Central Sta. via the "Michigan Central" route via Detroit, etc. We "stopped off" at Buffalo, N.Y. so we could visit Niagara Falls. We used the very old Terrace Sta. in Buffalo, a potential "National Historical Landmark" if there ever was one, with its wrought iron construction, etc. Too bad, they demolished it a few years too early to be "saved"! We had a really speedy ride across N.Y. state behind the famous New York Central "Hudson Type" locomotive.

For a brief few weeks after our Chicago trip, I had a afternoon job out of "Port", but that was too good to last! A nationwide "coal strike" in October saw the LIRR cancel many steam-hauled trains, even more than during the March 1948 coal strike. The long-lived "South Shore Express, train 27, was cancelled, never to reappear on the timetables. Again I was back on the "extra list", only most days I had to deadhead to Jamaica to work "west end" runs. One weekday I was a ticket collector on a "Race train" to the Jamaica track. We had six MP41 class MU cars, as we shuttled between Brooklyn and



**LIRR MP41 #1111
Rockaway Park Yard 1948
(Rugen-Huneke)**

the "track" at Locust Manor. This was the only time I worked on these cars, and by this time the following year all would be scrapped, by first being burned and then "cut-up", all done at Holban Yard.

The interior of these cars had eight cross seats in the middle of the car, while the ends had side-seating like I.R.T. subway cars had. There was no provision for seat checks, so you had to remember who you had gotten a fare from and who you had not. The hand-operated side vestibule doors were a big change from the air-operated ones on the MP54s. The traps had to be pulled inward at low platform stas. in order to secure them. At high platform stas. the traps were in "down" position and extended out beyond the car sides. This was necessary in order for the narrower MP41 cars to use high platforms designed for the wider class MP54 cars.

Those cars could really move along as they were all "motors", there were no dead-weight trailer cars like the MP54s had to pull along. We passed a train of MP54s at speed with no effort at all on one trip between Bellaire and Hollis!



Double Decker interior c.1950



**MP70A #1346 double-decker
Floral Park - 9/15/1948
(Votava-Boland)**

One cold morning I was working out of Babylon on extremely-heavy commuter train 103. We had ten "double deckers", the first time I had ever been on them and they took quite a bit of "getting used to" when you were always used to "single-deck" equipment! The constant "stooping" for the tickets in the lower "well" was the worse, the upper level was mostly "reaching in". When new these cars also had a "PA" system activated by inserting your "dream" brass key in a small box mounted on the end post in the vestibule. Actually the only other train with passengers was no. 162, the five twenty six out of Penn. Sta. in the evening. The equipment was stored in Hempstead during the day and we handled that "to and from" move as well.

Early in November on a particularly cold, still dark morning I stood on the station platform at Patchogue with groups of shivering commuters waiting for train 31 from Speonk. "Shrill whistling" that only a burly K4 could produce was coming in louder and louder as her engineer blew for the numerous grade crossings east of "PD" that began with South Country Rd.

As her headlight appeared on the curve east of Bay Ave., the crossing gates at S. Ocean Ave, were lowered by the towerman at "PD". Then he had to hurry down the stairs to hand up a "clearance Card" to the engine and train



**PD Tower view W Ocean Ave.
Photo: Steve Hoskins**

crews as "31" slowed passing the tower. "Today" she had PRR K4 no. 5432 and I counted eleven "mainliner" P54 coaches. "Paddy" Gleason was conductor and the head end man was Andy Heil. Andy was just below me on the seniority roster. This crew was an "all night job" out of Jamaica who came out on train 30 that left just after midnight. I was on a "Patchogue" ticket collectors job that worked 31 to Jamaica and when no. 35 came in from Speonk a little later, I collected on that into Penn. Sta.

This was a "short" job that went back to Patchogue on trains 106-54 and arrived back in Patchogue at one five p.m.. Whenever I was in Penn. Sta. at breakfast time I always headed for the PRR YMCA on the fourth floor of Pa. Sta. The cafeteria there always had delicious "Philadelphia Scrapple" on the menu for the Pennsy men up from Phila. on the "Clockers". Place two country-fresh eggs on a big slice of "scrapple" and you've got a great meal!



**Babylon Station
View E - 1954
(Edwards-Keller)**

Train 106 cut the rear car, the RPO, off at Babylon sta., to be backed in upon and coupled to train 54's rear coach, after the "MU" went on to the yard. While unloading mail at Bay Shore at about twelve thirty p.m., all of a sudden an unfamiliar steam whistle cut loose with a couple of long blasts! Looking west expecting to see a "steamer" to come around the curve at any moment, I was assured by the regular crew that the whistle came from LILCO's gas manufacturing works about two blocks west to let the workers there know lunch hour was over.

LILCO at that time had a major plant near N. Clinton Ave. crossing and the RR that manufactured cooking and heating type gas for Suffolk County that was delivered by gas mains. Many carloads of coke were used daily in the process and both the Patchogue and Speonk freight jobs usually spent a couple of hours at least Mon. to Sat., switching out the emptys and spotting loads at the big conveyor near N. Clinton Ave. Besides the inbound coke, there were outbound tank cars of "by-products" that resulted in making "gas" from coke.

When the "Soutnside Extra" Sunday freight ran, it usually set off cars of coke and empty tanks for LILCO in the Bay Shore team tracks. After LILCO closed the plant in 1952 in favor of natural gas via pipeline from Texas, I wrote LILCO about obtaining the "whistle". The sounds made by it were similar to a B&O "President Pacific"! I soon received a reply from them.

Seems that soon after "Pearl Harbor", the Bay Shore Fire Dept. was afraid that an enemy attack might knock out electrical power, which would mean the fire siren to roust out the "volunteers" would not sound!