

The Westconn Manifest

The Monthly Newsletter of the
Western Connecticut Chapter of the
National Railway Historical Society



www.westctrhs.org

Since 1953

April 2006

On March 26, 2006 there was a bit of excitement on the track opposite the SoNo Switch Tower Museum when the catenary contact came off a passing train and struck the building across from former Tower 44. Below are photos of the train car, damage to the building, and the repair crew.

Never a dull moment at the "Tower"!



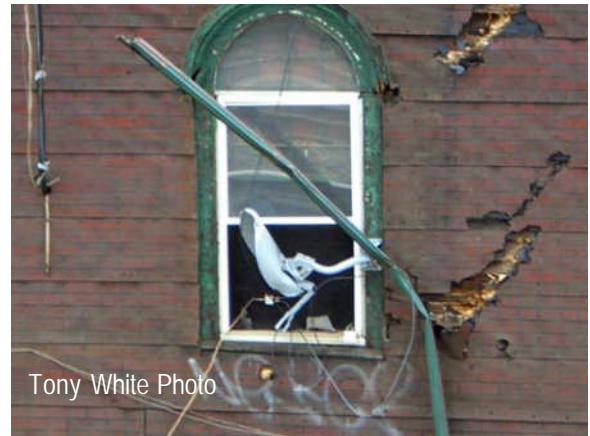
Tony White Photo



Tony White Photo



Dana Laird Photo



Tony White Photo



Tony White Photo



Dana Laird Photo

THE WESTCONN MANIFEST
is the official newsletter of the Western
Connecticut Chapter of the National
Railway Historical Society – (NRHS).

Articles which appear in

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contributions of material, complaints and
exchange copies of other chapter
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The Western Connecticut Chapter of the
NRHS is separately incorporated as a CT
not-for-profit corporation.

The Chapter is involved in the
preservation of American railroad history
and artifacts.

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The Chapter meets monthly, usually on
the 4th Monday, at the United
Congregational Church 275 Richards
Ave. in Norwalk, CT or at the
SoNo Switch Tower Museum
77 Washington St. Norwalk, CT
at 8:00 P.M.

Meeting dates for 2006:

1/23, 2/27, 3/27, **5/1(Annual Dinner)**,
5/22*, 6/26*, 7/24*, 8/28*, 9/25*, 10/23,
11/27 and 12/18.

*Chapter meeting to be held at the SoNo
Switch Tower in South Norwalk, CT

The SoNo Switch Tower Museum is
maintained and operated by volunteers
of the Western Connecticut Chapter.

Western Connecticut Chapter - NRHS
Inc.

77 Washington Street
Norwalk, CT 06854

203 246-6958

www.westctnrhs.org
www.sonotower.org

Name correction for new Member:

Stuart J. Werner - White Plains, New York

Dues Renewal

**Just a friendly reminder that 2006 dues must
be paid before March 31, 2006.**

**If you have not sent in your dues, please
send them A.S.A.P.**

Thank you!

News item from Ed Holowinko

For those people interested in the Poughkeepsie bridge.
Walkway over the Hudson will have its Annual meeting
Sunday April 23 at 1 PM in Poughkeepsie, 9 Vassar St.. The
meeting will give an update and progress of the bridge. This
meeting is open to the public and there are cookies. For
those not interested in the meeting there will be a tour of the
bridge from the top (about 2:30 PM). If any is interested in
viewing the bridge please contact the organization at
www.walkway.org .

The cost for members attending the Tower Operators Day event and
cookout on May 13 is \$25. Payment must be received by May 6.
Call the Tower for information. 203 246-6958. Thank you.

The Sono (Railroad) Switch Tower Museum

is now open on Saturday's and Sunday's
April 29 thru October from noon until 5 PM.

**Please help us show the Tower and how it operated
to the public.**

To volunteer, contact John Garofalo at:
(203) 246-6958
or sign up at the Tower.

Thank you, your help is greatly appreciated.

From: Robert Briechele

Fantastic book for railroad buffs

I just finished reading the book, "Set Up Running" by John W. Orr, son of a Pennsylvania Railroad locomotive engineer. The book is an account of Oscar P. Orr and his experiences on the PRR from 1904 to his retirement in 1949. "O.P." as he was called, handled a significant number of the PRR steam locomotive classes save for the C-1 0-8-0's and G5s 4-6-0's and, if I recall, correctly, the J-1 2-10-4's. Neither did he run the one-off locos (S-1, S-2, HH-1, HC-2, CC-1) nor the CC-2's, T-1's, or Q's.

The book relates many of the operating characteristics of the H-classes, the K's, the L-1's, the I-1sa's, the M-1's, the early 2-6-0's and others. Also covered in depth, are the many aspects of the working life of an engineman, the problems, the good times. This is a thoroughly engaging and fascinating book that kept me hard at it.

The author relates O.P.'s difficulties with PRR tenders having limited coal capacity and, as well, limited water capacity, the refusal of Altoona engineering staff to pay heed to his complaints although, with the advent of 'coast-to-coast' tenders, this issue was, to some extent, alleviated. Interesting, too, is how O.P. learns how to use cut-off by moving the reverser lever or Johnson Bar closer to the center notch to conserve fuel and water and make the job of fireman easier. He was highly regarded by his fellow workers and the brass hats as well for his ability to get his train moved over the road.

He talks of the experiences of firing these locomotive classes, their running characteristics, the rough-riding 2-10-0's. Also covered are the complexities of bidding for runs based on seniority and the general working life of a fireman or engineer.

I cannot recommend the book strongly enough for those whose interest extends into this subject matter and, of course, those who have a particular affection for the PRR.

Item: this formerly very active collector of builder's plates (and a few numberplates) finds it strange in the extreme to see a Keystone number plate with the single digit engine number, '8' which is pictured in the book. How odd looking that is!

There are few photos, a few maps which helps immensely in tracing the areas in which O.P. found work. But this is not a railfan picture book; it is in the text that this book serves as a window on a world long gone.

Published by The Pennsylvania State University Press in 2001, available in hardbound or paperback formats. Highly recommended!

Photos by Dana Laird



Recently restored Maywood Station as seen on April 3rd. Their next open house is Sunday May 7th. You can get more information at: www.maywoodstation.com Atlas has models Available of the station in 3 historic color schemes; in HO and N.



Fanwood, New Jersey Station was built in 1874 by the CNJ. It is on the National Register. There were also scale models for this station as well; in HO and O. Fanwood is now served by NJ Transit from a new station across the tracks.

Reprinted from the Greenwich Post (CT)

March 9, 2006

Great New Haven electrification was underway 100 years ago
Author: Albert Brecken

One hundred years ago, the New Haven Railroad initiated an electrification project that would much affect the people of Greenwich. When complete, never again would a fleet of steam locomotives speed through Greenwich emitting soot and toxic fumes. Greenwich people would ride on the first passenger trains in the world to be pulled by locomotives designed to operate on alternating current and the power source for this innovative electrification system that eventually would become the "standard" rail electrification system throughout the world would be a generating plant in Cos Cob.

The New Haven had to plan to operate electric trains into Grand Central Terminal in order to comply with a New York state law that prohibited steam trains in mid-town Manhattan. At the time, the "standard" system was low voltage direct current conducted to the train by a semi-insulated conductor on a track level known as the "third rail." The third rail system was essentially limited to short-distance passenger trains. The ideal system for the New Haven would be one that would power heavy freight trains, intercity passenger trains, and the numerous trains needed for commuter service, but a system of this scope and magnitude was non-existent.

George Westinghouse believed such a system was possible if powered by a high-tension alternating current system that would far surpass the limits of a third rail operation. Confident in what at the time was only a theoretical concept, Westinghouse proposed a system that was a dramatic departure from existing technology.

Eleven thousand volts of alternating current would be conducted to the trains through a wire, or "trolley" suspended over the tracks. A locomotive would have a "direct connection" to the generators that developed an electric force equivalent to thousands of mechanical horsepower.

There was no empirical knowledge available to those designing the system because the New Haven electrification would be the very first application of this untried and unproven concept.

The first and most important problem to be resolved was to build a locomotive with traction motors that operated on alternating current. The momentous decision to electrify with alternating current could be based solely on the assurance that the performance of such a locomotive would satisfy all expected operating requirements when in service.

The New Haven electrification was underway in 1905 when Westinghouse engineers began to build an experimental locomotive that would be the model for a fleet of locomotives. The very first of all New Haven 'electrification' photographs was one taken of the model locomotive when still in the 'prototype' stage of design. The photograph is dated 1905 and is in the archives of the Historical Society of the Town of Greenwich.

The New Haven engineers gave approval to the new system after rigorous testing of the model locomotive. Next was an extraordinary engineering project between Stamford and Woodlawn Junction, which was underway in 1906. There were two divisions of engineering; one was the erection of girders which supported the trolley wires placed over the tracks, and the other was the construction of the power plant at Cos Cob.

"The waterfront site at Cos Cob was chosen because coal could be delivered by barge and Mianus Harbor provided the source of water needed for condensing the steam exhausted by the turbines. The Mianus River "up-stream" was the source of "pure" feed-water for the boilers. Original 1906 "on the job" blueprints of the plant, the only ones preserved, are in the archives of the historical society.

The system was energized for the first time in April 1907, and revenue service began in July. The initial period of operation from 1907 to 1911 was an experimental one, after which the system was expanded. By 1912, the Cos Cob plant had been doubled in size and generating capacity, and the Harlem River Line was the only six-track electrified line in the world.

By 1914, the system was extended to New Haven, and the Danbury and New Canaan branches were electrified. In 1918 the Hell Gate Bridge linked the New Haven to the Pennsylvania Railroad, and trains between Boston and Washington operated on electric power between New Haven and a junction in Queens. The freight line across Brooklyn was electrified, and freight trains were running "express" on electric power between the Cedar Hill yards at New Haven and the Bay Ridge freight-transfer terminal.

The Pennsylvania and Reading lines first used the New Haven system for commuter trains, and the Norfolk and Western used it for heavy freight trains. The New Haven could boast of the "heaviest traffic on any electrified line in the world" until the vastly larger Pennsylvania Railroad electrified its main line with the New Haven system. It was obvious that the New Haven had pioneered a system that would be successful on any railroad in the World.

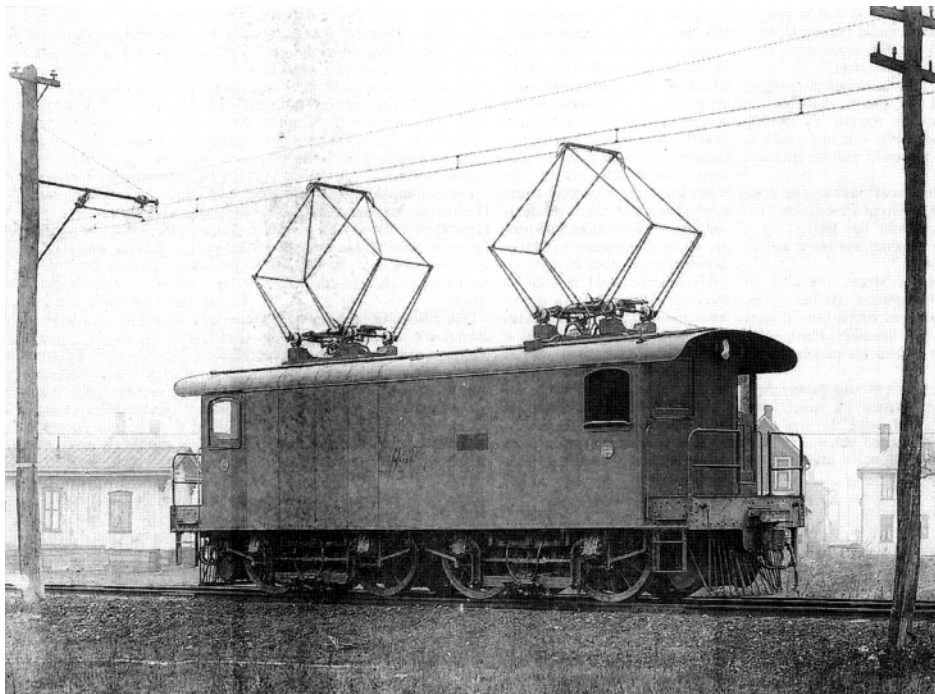
Because of its strategic importance, the Cos Cob power plant was placed under strict security during World War II. The enormous volume of war-time traffic in the electrified zone necessitated the construction of a boiler at Cos Cob, equivalent in height to a five-story building, and the addition of the class EF-3 electric freight locomotive to the locomotive fleet. With a 'pinpoint' control system, and a power reserve that reached 9,200 horsepower, a single EF could haul a freight between Cedar Hill and Bay Ridge in the same time that it took two steam locomotives to move a freight only 14 miles across the grades on the Poughkeepsie Bridge freight line."

The "single-phase system," as the high-tension trolley system came to be known, was used extensively in other countries that preferred to rely upon rail transportation rather than roads for vehicular traffic. The most notable example of rails rather than roads was the famous Japanese "Bullet Train" that was constructed between major population centers and went into operation in 1964 with train speeds of 130 miles-per-hour.

In 2000, there finally was an 'all-electric' line between Boston and Washington after the electrification was extended from New Haven to Boston and the "Acela" train was introduced in an attempt to make rail travel a feasible alternative to road and air travel.

When the 'Acela' first cruised between Stamford and Port Chester, it operated under the original 1907 trolley, which has since been replaced. The Cos Cob power plant has been demolished, and modern electric trains operate with improved technology, but the basic system concept, first engineered and utilized by the New Haven, endures.

Albert Brecken is a native of Byram who now lives in Port Chester. He has an avid interest in early technology and local history. The acquisition of the Cos Cob Power Plant by the town enabled him to do historical research uncovering photos and documentation of the first advances in electric trains.



This photograph of the world's first "main-line" electric locomotive built to work on alternating current was taken when the train was still in the prototype stage of design. It is dated 1905. The construction of the first New Haven Railroad electric passenger car was a joint effort between Westinghouse Electric and the Baldwin Locomotive Works in Pittsburgh. Photo courtesy of The Historical Society of the Town of Greenwich.



An easy way for you to help your Chapter.

If you do on-line shopping you can earn money for The Western Connecticut Chapter
By going to either www.westctnrhs.org or www.sonotower.org
and clicking on the Shop for Charity Day banner.

This will take you to their site and as long as you stay within this link - your purchases will earn a percentage of your purchase for the Chapter.

They have over a 1,000 stores listed. Just look for the store you want to shop from or browse through the list. The prices are the same as if you went their directly.

The only difference is that your chapter benefits from your purchases.

So, before you make your next on-line purchase, please take a minute to see if the store you are making purchases from is listed.

This is just a few of the stores listed on the site:

Office Max	Lands' End	Lillian Vernon	Target	Vermont Teddy Bear	Hallmark
CompUSA	Home DePot	Breck's Bulbs	Michigan Bulbs	Flowers USA	1-800-PetMeds

This site does not require you to give any personal information, nor are there any hidden charges .

Thank you!

Please contact Roberta Ballard at: 203 792-8558 or editor@westctnrhs.org if you have any questions or concerns.

Westconn Schedule of Events

Saturday April 29 and Sunday April 30 - Finger Lakes Railfair - "The Field", 1767 East Shore Drive (NY Route 34), Lansing, New York. For information contact James S. Torgeson 716 439-2577 or e-mail: jst25@cornell.edu

Saturday April 29 - SoNo Switch Tower Museum opens for the season - 12:00 - 5:00

Sunday April 30 - SoNo Switch Tower Museum - 12:00 - 5:00

Monday May 1, 2006 - Annual Chapter Dinner - The Waters Edge at Giovanni's II 2748 Post Road Darien, CT 6:60 PM
Only \$40.00 per person - payment must be received by April 21, 2006. Call 203 246-6958 for information.

Saturday & Sunday May 6 & 7 - SoNo Switch Tower Museum - 12:00 - 5:00

Saturday & Sunday May 13 & 14 - SoNo Switch Tower Museum - 12:00 - 5:00

Saturday & Sunday May 20 & 21 - SoNo Switch Tower Museum - 12:00 - 5:00

Monday May 22 - Chapter Meeting - SoNo Switch Tower Museum - 8:00 PM

Saturday & Sunday May 27 & 28 - SoNo Switch Tower Museum - 12:00 - 5:00



The Western Connecticut Chapter, NRHS Inc. supports Operation Lifesaver

Our Next Chapter meeting will be the Annual Chapter Dinner to be held on
Monday, May 1, 2006 at:

The Waters Edge at Giovanni's II
2748 Post Road Darien, CT

Come celebrate Amtrak's 35th Birthday with us!