

LONG ISLAND RAILROAD

· INFORMATION BULLETIN ·

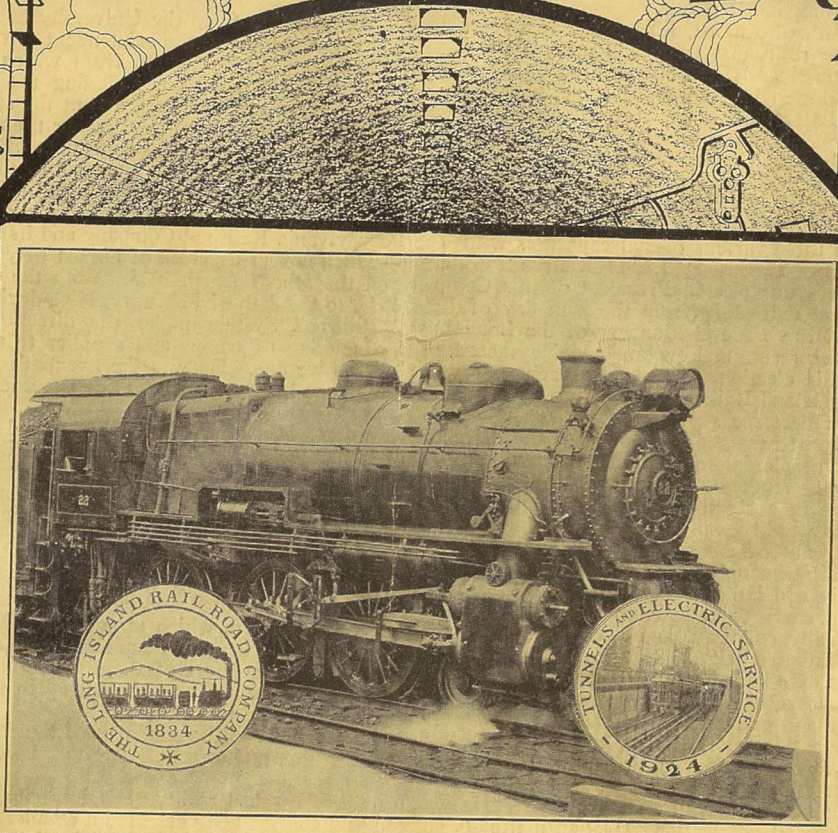
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among Patrons and Employees of
local and general Railroad questions.*



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HISTORY OF THE LONG ISLAND RAILROAD

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(Continued)

William H. Baldwin, Jr., of Brooklyn, was called from the Southern Railway to succeed Austin Corbin as President of the Long Island Railroad.

After 1896 the Long Island Railroad began to lose money. The traffic had increased materially, but the expenses had increased correspondingly. The traffic consisted of a large amount of so-called "short hauls," which, though profitable to street railways and electric operation, are unprofitable to most steam railroads. Accordingly, President Baldwin decided that it would be necessary to electrify the lines which handled this type of traffic. To handle it under steam railroad conditions would have required extensive enlargement of the terminals, and a large increase in the number of locomotives and coaches.

In 1896 the Atlantic Avenue Railroad Company was leased to the Nassau Electric Railroad Company, and in 1899 consolidated with it, for the purpose of electrification from Flatbush Avenue, Brooklyn, to Jamaica. The old line of the Brooklyn and Jamaica Railroad between these two points is at present owned by the Nassau Electric Railroad Company.

The Great Neck and Port Washington Railroad Company extended the North Side Division from Great Neck to Port Washington in 1898. It was merged with the parent company in 1902.

In 1898 the "Flatbush Avenue Agreement" was made with the New York and Rockaway Beach Railway Company, the Prospect Park and Coney Island Railroad Company, the Union Elevated Railroad Company of Brooklyn and the Brooklyn Elevated Railroad Company. This provided for the construction of a connecting elevated link between the Brooklyn Ele-

in existence, was very popular and liberally patronized. Trains leaving Park Row stopped at Adams Street and Nostrand Avenue. These trains, run in conjunction with the B. R. T., were pulled by small steam locomotives. The cars were afterward used by the Long Island Railroad as wooden trailers between the steel motor cars of their electric service between Flatbush Avenue and Jamaica, until their use was prohibited in 1913. Through service over the Prospect Park and Coney Island Railroad to Coney Island was provided for.

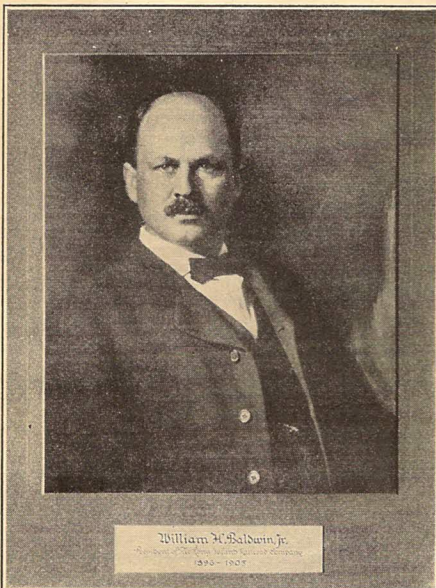
In 1897 the law was passed in the Legislature which compelled the so-called "Atlantic Avenue Improvement." This improvement consisted of the elimination of all grade crossings between the Flatbush Avenue Terminal and Atkins Avenue, East New York, by the construction of tunnels and elevated viaducts. Ninety-one highway or foot grade crossings and nine electric railway grade crossings were so eliminated. The act also created the Board for the Atlantic Avenue Improvement, to consist of seven members, one of them a practical civil engineer, and all to be appointed by the Mayor of Brooklyn, two of them on the written nomination of the President of the Long Island Railroad. The act was amended in 1901 to allow the work to proceed, but it seems that the Brooklyn Rapid Transit Company attempted to block the work through legal proceedings, so that the actual work was not started till November, 1901. The cost was to be shared by the City, whose share was not to exceed one and a quarter million dollars, and the Atlantic Avenue Railroad Company and the Long Island Railroad Company, though the latter Company paid all of the railroads' share. The work was completed at the time of the electrification in 1905. A tunnel to City Hall, Manhattan, was also planned, but never built.

Thrilling Ride of "Mile-a-Minute-Murphy"

In the year 1899 an event occurred which brought considerable publicity to the railroad, and occupied a high place in the field of sport. Charles M. Murphy, a bicycle rider, had been contending for many years that he could ride a bicycle in less than a mile a minute. He finally interested H. B. Fullerton, of the Long Island Railroad, in his enterprise. A board track was built in the center of the tracks for a distance of two and three-eighths miles, from Maywood Station east, on the old Central Extension. After several trials with light engines, which did not reach the required speed, the memorable ride was scheduled for June 30th.

On that day the car, which had been fitted up with a special hood on the back to protect Murphy from the wind, was pulled by Engine 74, one of the best on the road, and piloted by Sam Booth, one of its best engineers. The start was made, and when the train had passed a black strip marking the beginning of the measured mile, the engine and car were hurtling along at the rate of a mile a minute. The first quarter was passed in 15 1-5 seconds. Several times Murphy fell back, and it was feared that he would be killed if he were to get into the vortex of air currents closing in behind the train, where he would have been thrown off his bicycle. But he kept grimly on, through a cloud of smoke, dust and cinders that all but obscured the daring rider.

The half-mile post was negotiated in 29 2-5 seconds, and the train rushed into the last quarter, which was reached in 44 seconds, at the rate of 70 miles



vated line at Chestnut Street Junction, so that elevated trains might be run from Broadway, Brooklyn, to Rockaway Beach. It also provided for another link between the elevated at Flatbush Avenue and the Long Island Railroad, so that trains might be run from Brooklyn Bridge to Jamaica.

This service, during the few years in which it was

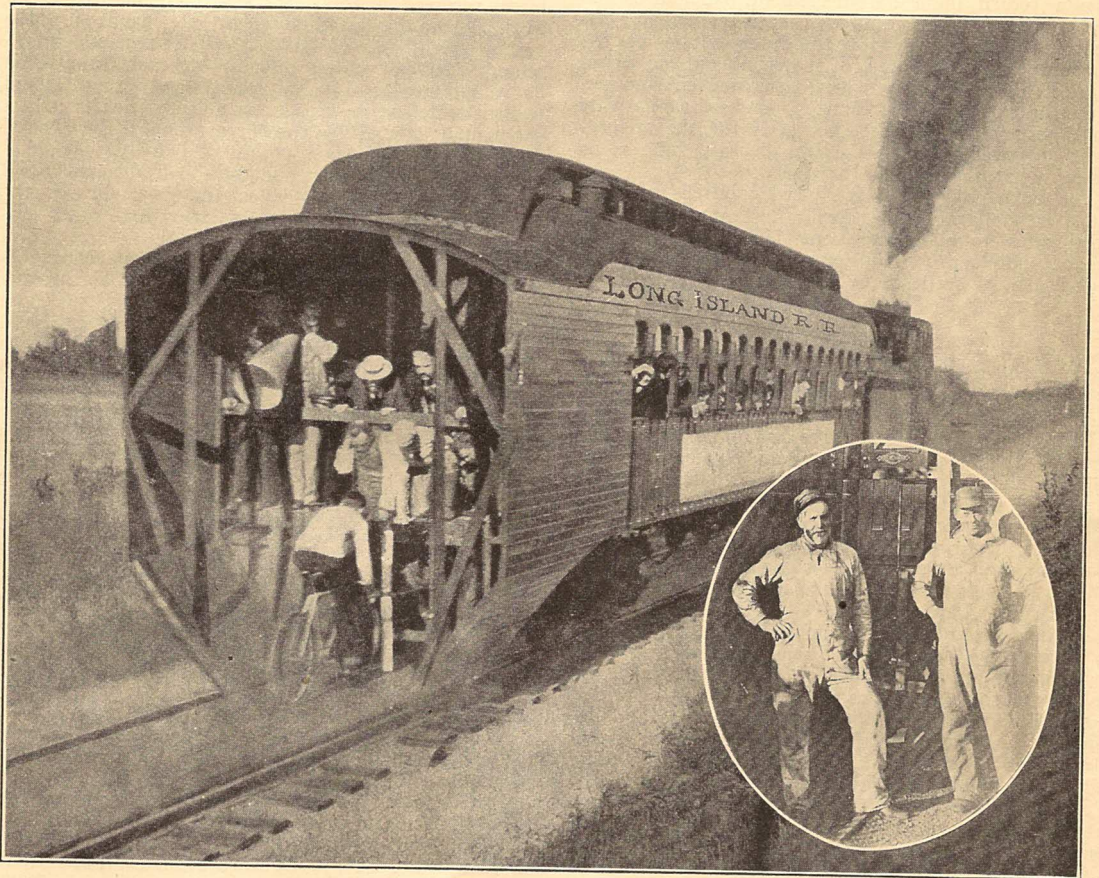
an hour. Several times the rider seemed about to literally run into the train and it was probable that he would have made even better time had the train made better speed. A great shout arose from the hundreds of spectators lining the road on either side when the mile was passed in 57 4-5 seconds, which stands today as the fastest mile ever made by the power of human will and human muscle.

But a feeling of dismay came over the little group of officials and referees on the rear platform of the train. For going at that terrific speed there was no method of stopping in time. Murphy might have been compelled to finish on the ties, which would have meant sure death, traveling at that speed. But Fullerton, a big strong man, reached over and pulled the rider and his bicycle onto the platform. A few seconds later the train dashed madly over the end of the boards. Murphy was pulled into the car, demented for over a period of five minutes. But he regained his senses, and was as healthy as when he started. He entered that race as Charles M. Murphy, but when he had finished, he had a new name, which

five miles an hour. The tests were suspended in December, 1908, but the concrete bases of the steel spans and poles holding the wires still remain, lining the abandoned track for many miles across the plains.

Pennsylvania Railroad Acquires Controlling Interest in Long Island System

The Long Island Railroad, throughout the entire period of its existence, had always had difficulty in obtaining the financial support of the people of Long Island. The railroad was run for the people's benefit. It increased the value of the real estate near its lines a thousandfold. But for some reason or other, the people did not seem to have that faith in the Company which showed itself in liberal subscriptions to the stock and purchase of bonds. Whenever the Company wanted financial aid it had always to turn to places other than Long Island. The great rehabilitation of the property under Austin Corbin was accomplished by Boston and London capitalists. When money was needed for electrification, it could not be found on Long Island. It was a great discouragement.



CHARLES (MILE-A-MINUTE) MURPHY PACED BY L. I. R. R. TRAIN, JUNE 30, 1899. (INSERT ENGINE-MAN BOOTH AND HIS FIREMAN)

will stick with him for all time—"MILE-A-MINUTE-MURPHY."

Another event of interest also happened some years later on the old Central Railroad. In 1908 the Pennsylvania Railroad, in experimenting for the proper type of electrification to use for its terminal, rebuilt over five miles of track from Hempstead Crossing eastward toward Bethpage Junction. Many different types of overhead wires were set up, and a dummy tunnel was erected, and for several months experimental trains were run at the rate of sixty-

ment to the Company that it was obliged to turn to outside help.

Through Mr. Baldwin's energy, the Pennsylvania Railroad Company became interested, and in May, 1900, that railroad obtained stock control of the Long Island Railroad Company.

The first plan to stabilize the finances of the Long Island Railroad was the creation of a 4% Refunding Mortgage, authorized in the sum of \$45,000,000, over \$26,000,000 of which was removed to provide for all underlying liens, and \$10,000,000 of the residue sold