

Many of the men, near or past the retirement age of sixty five took their pensions, while the few "younger" men in seniority "trimmed" on jobs further east on the RR.

This also meant closing the "block stas." and removing the manual block signals at Speonk, Hampton Bays and Amagansett on the Montauk Br. and at Yaphank and Mattituck on the Main Line. These would become "block limit stas", called unattended block stas. until soon after WW II.) The semaphore-type lock signals at Hampton Bays and Mattituck were the last of that type on



**Mattituck Station Block Limit Signal  
View E 6/05/1955 Archive: Dave Keller**

the RR, all the other manual block signals having been changed to the "position light type", (PRR Standard).

On April twenty fourth the LIRR operated "The 125th Anniversary Special". It ran from Jamaica to Riverhead and return. This was to celebrate the founding of the LIRR in 1834. The RR also issued a small booklet as they had done in 1934 to commemorate the event.

The motive power was two freshly painted Alco "RS-3s" on the point, (nos. 1560 and 1556), pulling seven cars. Almost every type of passenger equipment as represented in the consist, which starting at the "east end" of the train and working back were: "Jamaica", with observation platform on east end of car; ex D.L.&W., now LIRR, parlor car "Julia Ward Howe"; an ex R&M "American Flyer" coach; an ex NYC "heavyweight" coach; two 2900 series coaches and a "Ping" combine. That's the way we saw the "Special" at Riverhead sta. when it was about to leave on it's return trip to Jamaica. Coming east the "Jamaica" had been the rear car. While the train's invited guests had lunch in Riverhead, the crew had taken the train to Camp Upton Jct. wye and turned the entire consist.

I don't recall who the engineer was, but the conductor was R.F. Bellis, son of the passenger trainmaster. He had a fake "handlebar" mustache and long "sideburns" for the occasion, wearing an old time uniform of the c1890s period. On



**LIRR RS-3 #1560 at Riverhead  
125th Anniversary Celebration  
4/24/1959 Archive: Dave Morrison**



**Conductor Richard Bellis  
125th Anniversary Celebration  
4/24/1959 : Dave Morrison**

front of the lead engine there was a big banner tied, proclaiming, "The LIRR-25th Anniversary Special"!

Norman Kohl and I photographed the "Special" eastbound along beautiful Peconic Lake, (in reality a "wide-place" in that river), in the Upper Mills section east of Riverhead. At that time the train was coming back from being turned at U.Jct.. Ironically I would not have known about this "Special" except that the lady ticket clerk at Greenlawn, Ms. Hilsenbeck, came out to meet my train, no. 606, that morning dressed in "gay nineties" style with hoop-skirts, high shoes and sun bonnet, and let us in on the "festivities" planned for that day. Her father was agent at Bay Shore for some time.

On two of the hottest days in early June, Norman Kohl and I walked the entire Oyster Bay Branch. The first day we did Mineola-Glen Head and next day from there to the "Bay". I was gathering more track and siding data for my map

project of the LIRR. Some of the private sidings were interesting then. At both Sea Cliff and Glen St. there were old wooden coal trestles that had wooden-roofs covering them, looking for all the world like New England style "covered bridges."



**Glen Head Station view NW  
Patterson Fuel Oil Co. - 1961  
(B. Seixas-Morrison)**

With the change to the summer timetable on June twenty second, navy blue uniforms became "history". All uniformed men from the Jamaica stationmaster to club car attendants would now be wearing light grey for the first time in LIRR history. I was able to pick a "day" run with overtime out of "Port", and it also boasted Sundays off too. I had been on the "shortest job on the RR", (nos. 605-606), since Sept. 1956.

If anyone wanted to see Pennsy parlor cars on the LIRR, this "summer timetable" was the time to see them! Going east on Fridays the "Advance Cannonball" had four; "The Cannonball" itself five, and the seven p.m. out of Jamaica, three. Both ex D.L.&W. parlors were mixed in at times also. Fridays, "The Cannonball" made Westhampton the first stop, so a Speonk-bound train was added, leaving a few minutes after "The Cannonball". This made the stops the "Cannonball" made, except on Friday evenings. This Speonk train, no. 36, carried a parlor car, the only time any Speonk train ever "rated" one. This went on for two or three summers.

On the Main Line train 214 to Greenport on Friday evenings always had two parlor cars that summer as well. If one cared to go out to Montauk on a Saturday that summer one could have seen twelve or so PRR parlor cars all coupled together on yard track no. three, awaiting their return to the city on Sunday evenings and Monday mornings.

My 1959 summer run had nearly seven hours "off" in L.I. City between trains so I was able to do much more "mapping" of the LIRR and taking a few photos as well. It was also the summer I became acquainted with Harold Fagerberg, a New Haven towerman at S.S.4 on the Harlem River Br. in the south Bronx. Since we were both LIRR "fans" we spent some enjoyable times talking "shop".

One fine summer afternoon the NH signal maintainer gave me a ride on his gasoline track car from S.S.4 to "Harold" tower on the LIRR. The ride over Hell Gate Bridge "out in the open" with the great view of the Manhattan sky-



**Hell Gate Bridge view SE  
(Boucher-Library of Congress)**

line I will always remember! Another time a NH freight conductor invited me to ride in the hack over "Hell Gate" and on to Bay Ridge on his train. I wanted to ride the back platform all the way, but he soon cautioned me against doing that. As we traveled thru East New York the reason soon became apparent. A "bombardment" of bricks and rocks rained down on the caboose from the overhead highway bridges. Nice people in that part of Brooklyn, once known as the home of "Murder Incorporated", back in the twenties!

Some afternoons in L.I.City on my "swing time" I continued my mapping of the huge amount of trackage in the area, even including PRR's Sunnyside Yard; largest Passenger Car Yard In The World", as the big sign proclaimed on the Pullman Co. commissary building for so many years. There had been many changes



**PRR Pullman Coach Yard  
Sunnyside, LI City View W  
c.1921 - (Osborne - Keller)**

**LI City, Sunnyside Yard/LIRR Yard A  
Aerial view SW - 5/19/1946  
Archive: NY Public Library**

the LIRR L.I.City passenger yard recently. The "loop" track connection to the float bridges was gone and all third rail had been removed since 1951-52. Steam heat for the passenger cars was now supplied by an oil-fired boiler located in a new building in the northwest corner of the yard near Borden Ave. For many years up to the "new" steam heat supply, the big "four-stacked" power house a few blocks north had supplied it. That facility was now closed down. A new combined ME Dept. and Trainman's cinder block building had been erected next to track "O" and hard by the iron fence on Borden Ave. Formerly the ME forces had the use of the ground floor of what was left of the old brick sta.



**LIRR terminal building and former general offices - View N  
54th Ave. along Front St. (2nd St.) Long Island City, NY  
11/03/1930 Photo; Percy Loomis Sperr - Archive: Dave Keller**

Building on Front St. The second floor had a trainman's room for the men to relax in during their long "swings" between commuter trains. This brick building had been sold to a scrap metal concern for their offices and as a storage place for some metals.

No longer did the Vernon Blvd. bridge viaduct extend over the passenger yard, now ended at Borden Ave and was used as a parking lot for subway commuters. A new high-level highway bridge a few blocks east now soared over both the RR and Newtown Creek. The Wheelspur Yard along the Montauk Pr. was gone and the property sold to small industries. One thing had not changed over the years. — "Izzy" still served up great chocolate ice cream sodas at his newspaper store at the corner of Vernon Blvd. and 50th ave.!

We attended the National Railway Historical Society convention in Pittsburgh over the Labor Day weekend. Most of Saturday was spent on a trolley tour of the city and surrounding towns in a PCC type car. That mile-long South Hills tunnel with its steep grade is worth riding and the view of the city from Mt. Washington's summit is nice too.

Sunday's trip was over the B&O from their sta. east to Rockwood, Pa. and then over the Johnstown Br. to that city. We had a complete trolley tour of the lines of the Johnstown Traction Co., which would soon be abandoned. The B&O supplied gondolas with benches and "open-window" coaches for the very scenic ride both ways and we had Alco "FAs" for power. For some unexplained reason no one was allowed in the open gondolas in either direction between McKeesport and Pittsburgh.

With the change to the "winter timetable" I could not keep my overtime job so I went back on the "short" job, (nos. 605-606), in "Port" again. A couple of "Indian Summer" days of my October vacation were spent walking and mapping out the Bay Ridge Br. from New Lots Yard to the float bridges.

Even then the line was beginning to show many signs of "deffered main-  
 enance".Both main tracks,though still well rock-ballasted,had weeds galore  
 ll the way to Bay Ridge.Most of the overhead catenary on the private sidings  
 as already removed as well as in the large New Lots Yard.Looking at all this  
 ade me think that the "1927 four-tracking and electricfication" of this line  
 as definitely "overdone or overbuilt" for the traffic that the Br. handled,  
 ven at that time,let alone 1959. The two brand new brick signal towers at  
 NO", (New Lots), and "NU", (New Utrecht Ave.), were only in service a year or  
 two at most,both being closed even before the "great depression" got going  
 on the LIRR!



**Atlantic Ave Grade Elimination c.1915  
 East New York Tunnel view N  
 Archive: Bob Diamond**

The East New York tunnel had a few rumors about it over the years. I've  
 eard,(not a few times),that section men working in there carried baseball  
 ats or clubs to fend-off the "tom cat sized" rats living in the bore,prob-  
 ably in unused track four.

Track four,though "out of service" since 1939 when the track connection to  
 he Atlantic Br. was severed,was still intact all the way from New Lots to  
 Fremont" tower even as late as 1944.I was told that after the "Brooklyn  
 Local Service" ended in 1939,that twenty or more class MP41 MU cars were  
 stored in the tunnel on track four.Another rumor had it that a number of  
 steam "ping" coaches were stored in the bore,also on track four.Vandals,  
 so goes the story,entered the tunnel at night and stole all the brass seat  
 handles in the "pings".Whether any of these "stories" are true remains a  
 mystery to this day.

I do know from working the "pings" that about fifteen of them had no  
 brass seat handles atrall.You would notice this when you went to flip them  
 over at terminals.In addition the side where the handles had been removed  
 had been placed next to the windows,definitely not "standard practice!"All  
 four individual tunnels were connected by "archways" at intervals.I never  
 walked thru it,as there is nothing to "map" in there.

Withn most of the afternoon off I visited several old station buildings  
 in hopes of finding old timetables or train orders in the attics. Most  
 agents or clerks gave "permission" readily as they had no idea what "treas-  
 ures" were in their stations. Glen Cove yielded hundreds of Western Union  
 telegrams from before WW II,while Stony Brook had stacks of "19" train ord-  
 ers from the 1942-46 era. Setauket turned up a 1929 and 1930 Official  
 Guide,in not too "crumbly-condition",while Eastport had stacks of old yard



**Eastport Station c.1925  
 Photo: James V. Osborne  
 Archive: Dave Keller**

check books with old LIRR freight car numbers over many years span.

Oddest find of all was in Jamesport sta. attic. It was a typical wall  
 clock with "West Jersey & Seashore RR" lettered on it's face!It did not work,  
 naturally.