

The
Camden & Amboy
Railroad
Historical Group



THE **John Bull** ETIN

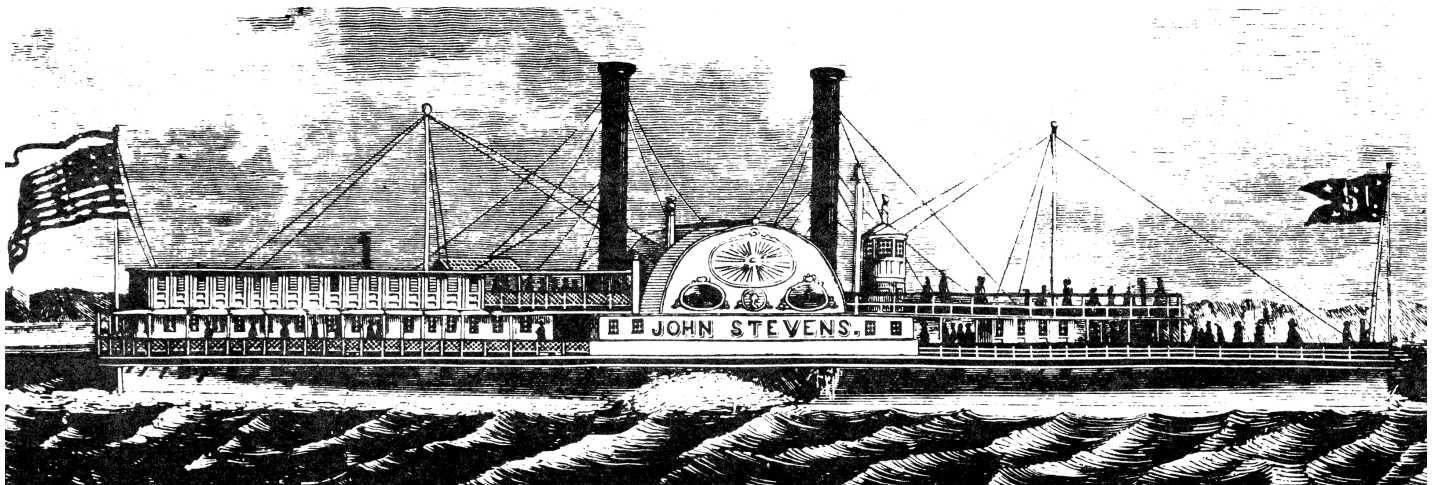
Vol. I, Number I

Spring-Summer 2007

The Nautical Steam Fleet of the Camden & Amboy

While much of the histories of the Camden & Amboy Railroad and the Stevens family centers around the development of the steam engine and construction of the rail line, the geographical limitation of the land lines reminds us the rail line didn't reach the major C&A end points for another 30 years after the debut of service in 1832. The Ste-

vens" as a source (authored by Edward O. Clark and printed in a mid-1980's copy of the Steamship Historical Society's Steamboat Bill, we now know that a Supreme Court decision in 1824 collapsed the Fulton-Livingston ship-building monopoly. A rush to built boats followed; the Stevens family was already involved in steamboat experimenta-



(Above) This large woodcut of JOHN STEVENS by W.H. Browns was used to illustrate the article on the STEVENS which appeared in The Journal of the Franklin Institute, Philadelphia, in the issue dated January 1846, and is one of the few existing contemporary illustrations of the steamboat—courtesy of The Journal of the Franklin Institute.

vens family connected the rail lines terminal with New York and Camden with steamboats constructed and operated under the Camden & Amboy pennant. The pride of the fleet was the "John Stevens" which was built in 1844 and lasted until 1904.

Using the article "Pioneer Steamboat John Ste-

tion and joined the rush to build vessels. They quickly became an acknowledged leader, both in quality and quality. Building on both the Hudson and Delaware Rivers, Stevens shipyards turned out three paddle boats (NEW PHILADELPHIA, ALBANY, TRENTON) beginning in 1825, the Trenton to cover service on the Delaware, the others Hud-

(Continued on page 7)

EDITORIAL: Introducing the JOHN BULL-etin; Histories Needed!!

It is with great expectation that our JOHN BULL-etin makes its debut, one year after the formation of our group. It is planned to become a bi-yearly publication. While the BULL Sheet focuses on the administration of the Group and its operation, the BULL-etin is designed to publish the results of our historical research on any subject that can trace its origin to either the Camden & Amboy or Pennsylvania Railroads. (This definition will allow articles with more current themes, such as the Penn Central or Amtrak, but only as they can be applied to our purpose of preserving the histories of the earlier railroad companies.)

In our effort to publish within the first year, we've chosen the name of the earlier newsletter, which was actually created by one of our publication's staffers. It's be considered a working Nameplate until something else goes aboard!

As with any historical group, we're only as good as the combined efforts of our members!

Looking back over the past year, we have experienced growth not imagined. We've held four meetings and made new acquaintances. We've been introduced to several C&A histories and varied views of the PRR in the Garden State. Our meeting site is a former PRR structure and perhaps provides the incentive to continue our growth in other ways, including the publishing of our collective research.

While the JOHN BULL-etin is in the capable hands of several members who have editing and writing experiences, it is the contributions of the full membership that will enable us to publish historical items of interest, and your contributions are encouraged. This assistance comes in any of several ways: providing story ideas, sharing the results of your individual historical research, even criticism!! A BULL-etin of interest is our responsibility!!

Your comments and suggestions are encouraged and welcomed! Above all, we need your support in all possible ways.

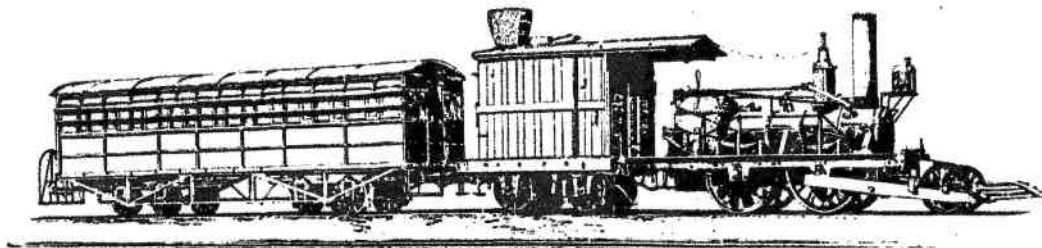
John Kilbride

SAVE THE DATE!

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 10, 2007

**PLAN TO ATTEND A DAY-LONG SYMPOSIUM TO COMMEMORATE
THE 175th ANNIVERSARY OF THE FIRST RUN OF THE JOHN BULL
LOCOMOTIVE TO BE HELD IN BORDENTOWN, NJ**

WATCH FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION IN FUTURE ISSUES OF "THE BULL SHEET"



The John BULLetin is published bi-annually by the Camden & Amboy Railroad Historical Group, a chapter of the Pennsylvania Railroad Technical & Historical Society. Opinions expressed are those of the writers and/or contributors and not of the Historical Group or Society. All members are encouraged to contribute material for publication. Typed articles or Word Documents are preferred. Items should be sent to the Editor; Mark Liss, 371 Cedar Ave, Langhorne, PA 19047, e-mail: mbliss2@verizon.net.

C&ARRHG Members Tour RiverLINE Shop Complex

Under bright sunny skies, twenty nine C&A RHG members and friends toured the light rail RiverLINE shop complex in Camden in mid-April. Electing to get a full picture of the line's operation, many traveled to the site via the line's light rail vehicle (LRV) designed service, a route that operates on the former Camden & Amboy Railroad right-of-way. Enroute, we were advised of bussing between the 73rd Street and 36th Street stops account of trackwork being undertaken to allow additional late night freight and RiverLINE time-sharing operations to occur. (The bussing



Photo by Ed Sproles

Two trainsets at rest adjacent to the shop complex near the 36th Street Station .



Photo by Kevin Painter

Exterior view of shop complex located in Pavonia Yard , Camden, NJ

forced us to miss the view of passing under the Delair Bridge line and the complex trackage that connects the south Jersey freight line with that Delaware River span.) Enroute, we noted the PRR-built station structures that remain at Burlington and Riverside, as well as the remains of the Kinkora Branch north of the Roebling station stop.

The line opened for service in March 2004 after an extensive rebuilding of the existing freight-only line. (Passenger service ended in 1953.) NJ Transit purchased the line from Conrail in June 1999 for \$67.5 million. The line's up-grade included the total rebuilding of the trackage, including the addition of lengthy passing sidings. Street running prevails at the Camden end. Twenty station stops were created along the 34.2 mile route. As a condition of the joint operations,



Photo by Kevin Painter

Tour guide extraordinaire Richie Viesz gets animated in front of a trainset

(Continued on page 6)

PLAQUE UNVEILED TO COMMEMORATE HIGH-SPEED PASSENGER SERVICE

Attendees at the June 14th unveiling of a plaque at Princeton Junction station, commemorating the beginning of high-speed rail passenger service were provided two extra reminders of the event's purpose and significance: five minutes after the start of the formal ceremonies, Amtrak's "Keystone" train No. 648 made its scheduled station stop enroute to New York with a train consist that included ex-Metroliner multi-unit car No. 813, one of several remaining members of the original sixty-one car fleet that exceeded 160 mph during acceptance testing in the late 1960's. Shortly afterwards, Amtrak acela train No. 2159 rushed by, enroute to Washington, also a visible present day reminder of the late 1960's vision started by Pennsylvania and Penn Central Railroads engineering employees, and the focus of the day's event!

Arrangements for the placement of the 42"x36" bronze plaque were initiated by the Pennsylvania Railroad Technical and Historical Society (PRRT&HS), to pay tribute to both the technological achievements undertaken in preparation for the Northeast Corridor Demonstration Project, a joint venture of the US Department of Transportation (DOT) and the PRR, and those individuals whose work and dedication made it happen. The plaque states the following:

Three speed records were established by rail passenger equipment in the Princeton Junction area in the late 1960's:

* On April 2, 1967, four US DOT high-speed test cars -- forerunners of the Northeast Corridor "Metroliners", -- reached a speed of 155.2 mph.

* On December 20, 1967, a United Aircraft Corp. Turbotrain passed this point at 170.8 mph before entering regular service between New York and Boston.

* In 1968-69, each of the 61 original "Metroliner" cars exceeded 160 mph during acceptance testing before entering regular service between New York and Washington.

The plaque also includes words to recognize, honor and place into memory all those who worked to upgrade the tracks, improve the signal

system, enhance the electric traction system, designed and manufactured the rolling stock and conceived, planned and operated the service that resulted from those historic events. Listed are both the PRR and Penn Central Railroads, governmental oversight organizations and the planning and engineering consultants involved.

Hosted by PRRT&HS president Al Buchan (a member of the demonstration project staff) who provided a historical overview of the Northeast Corridor's development, he was joined by Bob Watson (who served as coordinator of the Project) whose remarks included a listing of names of some of the individuals who participated in the milestone project. Remarks were also made by Jim Homoki, president of the Penn Central Historical Society, Rick Landell of LTK Engineering Services and George Else of Bombardier (representing the successor company to the Budd, Pullman Standard and Westinghouse Companies.)

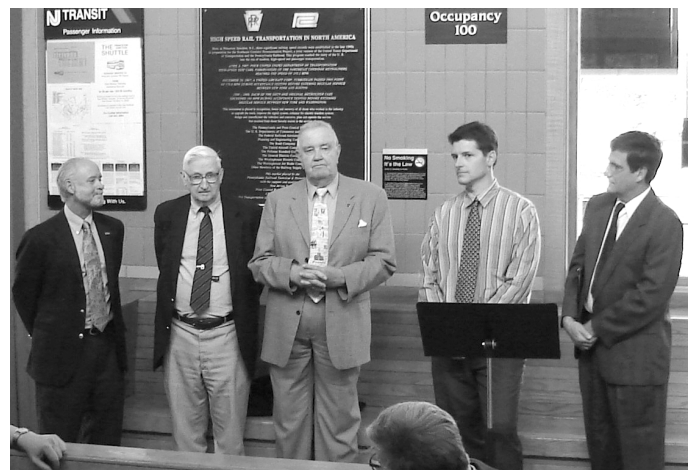


Photo by PRRT&HS president Al Buchan (center) fields a question from attendees at the June 14th unveiling of a plaque (background) commemorating the beginning of North American high-speed rail passenger service with the Northeast Corridor Demonstration Project. Joining him at the ceremony is (left to right) Rick Landell (LTK Engineering Services), Bob Watson (member of the Project's staff), Buchan (also a Project member), Jim Homoki (president of the Penn Central Historical Society) and George Else (Bombardier).

--jjk--

Offers clues to PC unit sand train operations**PLAINSBORO SAND PIT SITE OPENS AS NATURE PRESERVE**

The announcement that the former McCormick sand pit in Plainsboro had opened as a nature preserve, administered by the state's Audubon Society, was welcomed news to area rail historians as train views from the late 1970's showed the trackage that once supported sand trains operating into the site. A visit last fall, together with information supplied by railroad colleagues, has helped piece together the railroad's short-lived role at the site of a trans-loading facility.

Sand Operations

Begun in 1969 (*and rumored to be owned by the wife of PRR vice-president (later president) Greenough*), the pit supplied aggregate for the New York construction market. The sand was initially dug up by heavy dozers until a 50-acre pit was created. Later, a spring was struck, the hole filled in and a lake created. Floating suction machinery was then used and continued until the end in 1976, leaving a deep lake and scarred landscape littered with still-visible mining debris. The mining operation was shifted by McCormick to an up-state (New York) source and transported by river craft down the Hudson River for several additional years

Rail Operations

Open top hoppers were collected at South Amboy until enough were on hand for a movement. Engines capable of moving 1-2 mph were needed; the SD-9 was qualified (they were equipped with a hump-shove feature) and 3-4 would be deadheaded from Morrisville to South Amboy via Monmouth Jct. and Jamesburg. On the inbound move, trains ran "against the current of traffic" on Track 1 into sand pit trackage just south (timetable west) of Midway Tower. The switch was hand-operated, and train crews needed a Train Order to move west from Midway 2-3 movements per week was recalled as the frequency of operation and trains were typically 50-75 cars long.

Upon arrival at Plainsboro, the train would proceed at a slow speed clockwise around the loop and under a tipple. Trains were loaded at night and returned to South Amboy in the early morning hours, where the sand was loaded onto

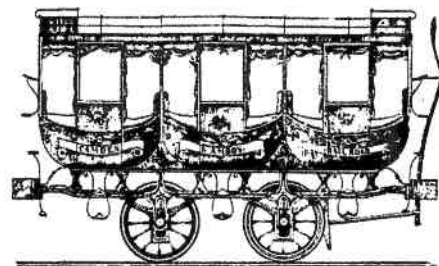
barges and taken into New York Harbor for distribution. Engines were returned to Morrisville via the Perth Amboy and Woodbridge Branch via Union, then west on the Main Line.

By 1971, FRA-enforced track standard issues prevented round-trip assignments from being completed within the 12-hour law; the Amboy Secondary and Jamesburg Branch trackage being restricted to 8 mph!! Most trains would make it back to either Old Bridge or Brown's Yard before "blowing up", requiring new crews for the remaining miles.

A visit today yields the piles of track timbers on either side of the tracks' swath through the forested landscape. The remains of the switch that controlled loop direction are visible; the switch off of Track 1, as well as the rail, are gone. A hiking trail now traverses the loop track and the remains of mining equipment dot the scenery. Some of the sand hoppers remain in Amtrak work train service.

(Author's note: The Plainsboro site, and the nearby abandoned Camden & Amboy right-of-way, would make for an easy half-day hiking tour, and enable photographers to snap views of Northeast Corridor trains in a rural setting!! Kindly let me know if you are interested in such a venture!!)

A special thanks to fellow-railroaders Clark Hampe, Dick Gratton, and the late Gerry Wolfe for their background information and recollections on this subject.



Original C&A passenger car
(Courtesy of Smithsonian)

C&AHG Members Tour RiverLINE Shop Complex (cont.)

We were met by RiverLINE trainmaster Richie Veisz and hiked the short distance into the shop complex, noting Juniata Terminal equipment (on lease to the line and laying over for the weekend in the yard), together with several sets of idle



Photo by Kevin Painter

Interior view of shop maintenance area

LRV equipment. (20 sets – an A-B-A consist – were purchased and seven were in the day's service.

Inside, we were escorted into the spacious shop complex and received an overall explanation as to the shop's role. Three tracks pass thru the building and a fourth enters from the north side. One of the thru tracks is used for car washing (automated!) and includes an inspection pit. Using a set of LRV equipment undergoing minor maintenance as a prop, Richie explained the creation of the DIME device, affixed to the electronic couplers to protect against debris damage while in operation. (DIME = **D**eer **I**mpact **M**itigation **E**quipment).

Following the shop visit, we were escorted into the operations center, where two dispatchers were working. Using computer screens, they were able to click on switch and signal symbols to route the LRV's in operation in and out of the single track sections and around out-of-service tracks. The dispatchers were located near the manned customer service desk that was

equipped to monitor video screens able to be focused on any of the line's station stops. Perhaps unique, all positions were manned by women the day of our visit! (RiverLINE dispatchers control the line full-time, even during the night-time freight-only use.)

Following a traditional group picture, we walked back thru the yard towards the 36th Street Station and snapped views of equipment laying over, including the leased work equipment. Some of the group elected to ride the line to Camden, allowing for a complete RiverLINE experience. That leg of the line enabled us to glimpse the freight engines idling at the south end of Pavonia Yard, as well as experience the street-running operation within Camden. Remaining evidence of the PRR's presence in Camden was sought, but remained elusive.



Photo by Kevin Painter

Another satisfied group of rail enthusiasts!

Special thanks to member Frank Kozempel for arranging the tour, and our host Richie Veisz for taking the time from a rather hectic day of supervising passenger transfers on/off buses to be our guide. (His enthusiasm for that role was obvious, and his quick-wit and humor made for an enjoyable visit and an education on what might have been a dull subject!)
(jjk)

The Nautical Steam Fleet of the Camden & Amboy (cont)

son River crossings. (*Curiously, they were built at opposite ends of the line: the Trenton in Hoboken, the others in Philadelphia.*)

Between 1827 and 1830, other boats appeared within the Stevens fleet, including the INDEPENDENCE and BURLINGTON, later a freight boat. In 1841, RAINBOW was launched, she served as a unsuccessful coming-together of several of Stevens' many experiments and was judged a failure!

With their jump in railroad construction, 1840 dawned on the realization that Stevens was in control of rail lines on both sides of the Delaware River and any competition between stage coach, other nautical fleets and other railroads now gone. By this time, they were operating boat services between Walnut Street, Philadelphia, and Bordentown, NJ; and South Amboy and Pier 1 in New York City, with the rail line connecting the two segments. Other routes in the company were ferry services between Camden and Philadelphia and Manhattan to Jersey City and Hoboken.

By 1844, new boats were needed, so planning was undertaken and construction begun. In a period of 18 months, six vessels, including three large ones, were launched. They were the JOHN STEVENS and JOHN POTTER, both about 223 feet long and some 690 tons in weight, TRANSPORT (243 ft, 742 tons) and smaller vessels PRINCETON (a tow boat) and Hoboken ferries JAMES RUMSEY and JOHN FITCH (137 ft., 316-342 tons). Constructed elsewhere was CAMDEN, a 130-foot tow-boat for Delaware River service.

TRANSPORT was a floating, powered warehouse! She was built to run on the New York - South Amboy line, to protect the C&A's "Emigrant and Transportation Line", conveying third class passengers and freight. (*She lasted until 1875, the end of waterborne freight service to So. Amboy and two years after passenger service was discontinued.*)

Soon after TRANSPORT's debut, the other two larger boat's construction begun. The STEVENS was completed first (1845) and was built with an iron hull, the first in the nation. As explained in the Journal of the Franklin Institute (Nov. 1846),

"this is, we believe the first iron steamboat proper that has been built in this country, that is, a steamboat on the legitimate plan, with side wheels, etc. for many propellers and screw boats have been constructed of iron, though, as we said before, no regular steamboats."

Robert L. (Stevens) named the boat after his father John. (*Stevens was proud that when completely finished, the boat's draft agreed to 1/4 inch of the estimated draft before building!!*) ThePOTTER followed; the JOHN STEVENS to cover the Delaware River route and thePOTTER the New York end, replacing INDEPENDENCE.

Steamboats were initially found to be more profitable than the train, passengers remaining the major source of revenue, and their preference for a more comfortable and safer trip afloat made them popular for traveling. Excursion trips began, a boat trip taken just for the experience! Except in winter when ice curtailed travel by boat, the service grew each season.

The STEVENS settled into a schedule calling for two round trips a day between Philadelphia and Bordentown. Later, a stop was made at Bristol (Pa), to connect with the newer Steven's rail line to Jersey City (The Philadelphia & Trenton RR). The NEW PHILADELPHIA, no longer needed there, was converted to a tow boat and sent to New York, later covering the New York- New Brunswick service as a connection to the Delaware & Raritan Canal.

The next new ship to appear was in 1851, when RICHARD STOCKTON was constructed at the Harlan & Hollingsworth shipyard in Wilmington, Del. 260-foot long, she featured 14-foot paddle wheels, indicative of a desire for increased speed. She joined the STEVENS on the Delaware River run.

Other C&A ships built by Stevens, and which appeared in trip advertisements at various times included JOHN NEILSON (1852: New York-New Brunswick, later with BURLINGTON on the south end), WASHINGTON (a Phila.-Camden ferry boat) and JOSEPH BELKAMP (1852: South Amboy -

(Continued on page 8)

The Nautical Steam Fleet of the Camden & Amboy (cont.)

NYC).

FASHION, a freight ferryboat later converted to passenger service, was purchased by the C&A in 1852, the NEW YORK was bought in 1855, becoming the Phila.-Camden “winter freight boat”.

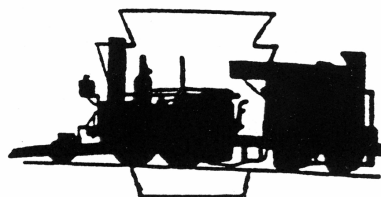
By 1853, competition with other lines – especially on the Delaware River end – re-emerged. The C&A Companies has built up business on the Burlington and Bristol services as insurance against future decline on the “old” New York Line via So. Amboy. “However, there was much local opposition to the C&A, allegations of poor service and an arrogant attitude towards prospective customers by the railroad and its steamers, referred to as ‘odious’ monopoly” was reported. (Recall that thru New York - Philadelphia train service began in the late 1830's.)

In 1854, the little iron side wheel towboat CAMDEN took up the heaviest tow of the season, 22 loaded canal boats, up to the D&R Canal, hoping to beat the ice. In 1855, the STEVENS burned. By the time of the Civil War, only TRENTON remained on the south end. Service in New York Harbor lasted seven more years until PRR take-over in 1872.

Few details are known on the disposition of the remaining boats. During the Civil War, BURLINGTON had her superstructure removed and four tracks laid on deck to serve as a railroad car ferry. This was to help relieve a bottleneck of freight car congestion in Philadelphia. Like the STEVENS, POTTER also burned, in New York in 1864. She was replaced by WILLIAM COOK, a larger, wooden-hulled version. *(Stevens was not to waste valuable equipment; several of their steam-powered engines were in more than one hull! The COOK was re-engined with the one from JOHN NEILSON.*

(Author's note: It is anticipated that the above narrative of both the C&A and Stevens “families” have provided a deeper insight as to the development of early steamboats, the various C&A route options between New York and Philadelphia, and a review of the vast holdings of the Stevens empire. Certainly when individual histories of the component segments are concurrently reviewed and composite narratives are attempted does the potential for a full picture begin to emerge!!)
(jjk)

Camden & Amboy Historical Group
W-11 Avon Drive East
East Windsor, New Jersey 08520-5647



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