

## F.A.H.P. News, March 12, 2012

**Steamship Service in the Mid-Twentieth Century:** Travel agents, of whom I was one in 1950, could not exist in the east without being recognized by the Trans-Atlantic Passenger Conference, a grouping of all major steamship carriers that crossed the Atlantic. Since transatlantic air travel was in its infancy, as many as a dozen steamship lines representing as many countries competed for business and pleasure travel from New York and Montreal (Halifax in the winter) to ports all over Europe. Most ships had three classes of travel: "Tourist" for those on a tight budget who numbered probably 70% of the total, "Cabin Class" as an intermediate and more comfortable way to go, and "First Class," the best each ship had to offer. Although ships differed in size and type of accommodations, as an average about 15% of the total used Cabin Class and First Class, respectively. Per-person Tourist Class fares ranged from \$150 to \$200, Cabin Class from \$300 to \$550, and First Class from \$500 upward, all one-way. Of all these transatlantic carriers, only two, the United States Lines and the American Export Line, flew the U.S. flag, and one, Canadian Pacific, was Canadian.

The summer vacation period for teachers, students, and others who wanted to travel in the best weather caused long wait lists, especially in Tourist Class, on the fastest and most popular ships. That meant sailings from June 15 to July 10 eastbound and August 15 to Labor Day westbound. Unless a traveler was part of an organized tour, and there were many, it was not uncommon to be "wait-listed" for more than a year in advance for ships like the Cunard Line's *Queen Mary* and *Queen Elizabeth*, as this famous British line advertised them as "the Largest and Fastest ships in the World." Although fast times on several lines had been scheduled before World War II, in 1950 the *Queens* were the only ships crossing the ocean in five days. People on these long wait lists would usually opt for a second choice, often settling for a much older ship with poor accommodations that often took 7-10 days for the crossing.

The Cunard Line, formerly Cunard-White Star, had the most ships, no less than eight in the summer months, three of which were in the Canadian service. American Export had two new ships, the *Independence* and the *Constitution*, that were in service to the Mediterranean, calling at Lisbon, Barcelona, Cannes, and Naples. Grace Kelly's father chartered a whole deck on one of these ships when the wedding party went to Monaco for Grace's marriage to Prince Rainier in 1956, and the ship dropped anchor off shore so the party could go ashore by tender. In addition to the Cunard Line, from New York to the English Channel and ports in northern Europe, service was offered by the following steamship companies: United States Lines, French Line, Holland-America Line, Norwegian American Line, Swedish American Line, and Gdynia-American Line (Polish). From Montreal in the summer and from Halifax in the winter when the St. Lawrence River was frozen, Cunard and Canadian Pacific competed for the Canadian trade. A few of the British ships still used Liverpool as a European destination, but most used Southampton in England, and Cherbourg or Le Havre in France. Holland-America went on to Rotterdam, Norwegian American to Oslo, and Swedish American to Gothenburg. Before World War II, North German Lloyd and the Hamburg American Line had fast service to Bremerhaven and Hamburg, respectively. To the Mediterranean, in addition to American Export, were the Italian Line, the Greek Line, and the Home Lines.

The Cunard Line's *Queens*, the S.S. *America*, and at least one ship of the French Line and of Holland-America had continuous service through the winter. So did ships in the Mediterranean service. Many other ships were used for West Indies cruises ranging from 7 to 15 days. Since New York was the only much-used East Coast port, the first two days and the last two seldom had good weather. On cruises, all accommodations would be First Class; some of the smaller cabins and public areas were not used. There were usually about two World Cruises, ranging from 90 to 120 days in length, offered in the winter months. Cunard almost always had one, and its ship named the *Caronia* was built especially for cruising. Warren, Bertha, and Eleanor Marshall and their friend Alice Pusey took a World Cruise on the Canadian Pacific flagship *Empress of Britain* in 1937. Cunard usually offered a North Cape Cruise to the top of Norway in late June, which often experienced very poor weather.

On July 2, 1952, a brand new American ship christened the *United States* sailed from New York and docked at Southampton less than four days later. No longer could the Cunard Line advertise the "Largest and Fastest Ships in the World" for their famous *Queens*. Unfortunately the fast-growing airlines were soon carrying more passengers than were ships, and the *United States* was withdrawn from regular service about 10 years later. It is still in mothballs and was most recently saved from the scrap heap by a grant from H. F. "Gerry" Lenfest.

**Work Report:** 15 volunteers were on hand Tuesday night to accomplish the following: Drill and tap the remaining fitting holes in the new boiler for the Model 607, apply Diplag to cover the Fiberfrax insulation on the boiler of the Model 725, remove hood to remove one of the hinges on the Model 76, continue fitting and painting pump box and cross-member parts on the frame of the 607, and complete work on the new Auburn Heights sign. The remainder of the batteries were installed in the Rauch & Lang electric, and other mechanical aspects of the car were checked out. The water tank was disconnected and removed from the Model 725 for its "oil-sock modification," and a hole was cut in the front sub-floor above the tank for necessary access. Work continued on cleaning and sanding the under-body of the 607.

On Thursday, 14 volunteers worked on wrapping with Fiberfrax the circumference of the boiler for the 607, removal of the hinge on the 76's hood for slight relocation, painting the tires and the edge of the running boards on one of the locomotives, bolting the pump box and searching for more fasteners for the 607, and continuing the underside work on the 607 body. Jim Personti brought back the repaired water wheel for the mill in the electric train exhibit, plus two Stanley gauge bezels he has been rebuilding. Also, he reported that he has started taking apart the 607 engine for a complete rebuild. In addition, the big sign was erected in front of the property, and the doors were removed from the R.R. tunnel for the upcoming season. The bushes on the pond bank were pruned back to allow more side clearance for trains and for track work.

Productive volunteer work was accomplished over the weekend as well. On Saturday, Bill Schwoebel had his track gang of Dave Leon, Brent McDougall, Robert Hopkins and Tim Nolan hard at work, and Butch worked on the popcorn machine. Emil and Jerry Novak made electrical connections on the Rauch & Lang, and Tom began fabricating the felloe hardware for the Model 607 wheels.