

**Electric Trolley Lines around Wilmington:** While many of the suburban trolley lines had failed before I grew up, trolleys were the only means of public transportation in most cities including Wilmington (Delaware). Trolleys were everywhere, and one of the tests for obtaining an auto driver's license was to know when a driver was allowed to pass a standing trolley car. I first saw a "trackless trolley" in Dayton, Ohio, in 1936. These rubber-tired vehicles looked like a conventional Diesel trolley bus, but they were slightly smaller, much quieter, and there were no fumes or odor. Delaware Power and Light Company (DP&L) owned the trolley lines around Wilmington, and they converted to trackless trolleys almost overnight in 1939. They still required overhead wires and flexible catenaries to allow them to pull close to a curb.

Previously, when the tracks were in the street there was a loud hum when the trolleys were in motion, changing in pitch as the car picked up speed. A screeching of the flanges on the rail took place as they rounded sharp curves at 90-degree intersections. In Wilmington, 10<sup>th</sup> Street and Delaware Avenue were double-tracked from Market Street to Union, as were Market Street from Front Street to 15<sup>th</sup>, and Fourth Street from 3<sup>rd</sup> Street Bridge to Union. Except for Market Street (which was not wide enough), these double-tracked streets were equipped with "islands" for passengers to wait safely for the next trolley. Other vehicular traffic could always pass between the island and the curb, with the two parallel tracks being in the middle of the street inside the islands. Two-inch-high round markers with reflectors in the pavement outlined three sides of these islands, and cars and commercial vehicles could not drive on the track side if anyone was standing in the island.

Many of the other streets had a single trolley track down the middle. On one-way streets, trolleys traveled in the same direction as other traffic. For example, trolleys ran west on 6<sup>th</sup> Street, east on 7<sup>th</sup>, and west on 8<sup>th</sup>, all west from Market Street in center city. Some of the 6<sup>th</sup> Street trolleys ran via Elsmere to Price's Corner and returned on 7<sup>th</sup> Street (this was a part of the old Peoples' Railway Line to Brandywine Springs Park). There was a trolley on Washington Street from Delaware Avenue to about 40<sup>th</sup> Street, and the Market Street line ran single-tracked to Shellpot Park (owned by DP&L), and continued on Hillcrest Avenue to Brandywine Boulevard in Bellefonte. This line originally ran to Claymont and Chester with connections to Philadelphia. In the days of the river boats, a trolley line ran from downtown Wilmington to the Gordon Heights steamboat pier. The Fourth Street line continued single-tracked east and south to New Castle, with a spur to the Marine Terminal, where it connected with the Penns Grove Ferry that crossed the Delaware River.

Outbound trolleys on the Delaware Avenue line followed on a single-tracked West 17<sup>th</sup> Street and turned left just before Tower Hill School to their most distant point along Pennsylvania Avenue at Rising Sun Lane. Returning, they followed west 18<sup>th</sup> and then Delaware Avenue before reaching the double-tracked section again. The trolley barn was along Delaware Avenue near DuPont Street and the B & O Railroad's passenger station. At the barn, now the location of Trolley Square, cars were stored when not in service and regular maintenance was performed.

The trackless trolleys, that eliminated the rails in the street and the islands for boarding, followed most of the old routes and were still restricted by the supply of power from wires overhead. In the Wilmington area, they lasted from 1939 until about 1954, when polluting Diesel buses took their place, and the heavy copper wire in the overhead cables was scrapped by the Delaware Coach Company, a fully-owned subsidiary of Delmarva Power.

**Work Report:** On Tuesday, March 21, 11 volunteers were on hand, viz: Ted Kamen (in charge), Dennis Dragon, Larry Tennity, Jay Williams, Mac Taylor, John Schubel, Matt Richard, Bob Jordan, Ken Hilbeck, Mike Ciosek, and Tom Marshall. There was also an Events Committee meeting in the office.

On the Model 725, the louvered hood panels were rubbed and polished again, and the panels were returned to the car in the museum. The top-of-hood panels were brought to the garage for detailing. Hinging foot rests for Locomotive 402 were designed and measured. Installation of these, when built, will facilitate closer clearance

between track and stone wall where the tracks enter the basement (engine house) from the turntable and reduce the curvature inside the building.

On the Model 87, the left direction signal was repaired by fixing the light socket in the line to the signal. On the '37 Packard, the hand throttle was successfully removed for correcting a kink in the cable and lubricating for easier control. The Lionel electric trains and their layout were checked over and cleaned for the Volunteer Open House & Meeting on 3/25. The new 8-foot length of ½" stainless tubing was threaded on both ends prior to bending for the new Model 78 superheater. Two prospective volunteers, introduced by Art Sybell, were given a complete tour of our mechanical premises and the museum.

On Wednesday, March 22, six volunteers answered the call: Richard Bernard (in charge), Larry Tenny, Gary Fitch, Jerry Lucas, Bill Schwoebel, and Tom Marshall.

The configuration of the new superheater for the Model 78 was nailed down and its bending to shape was about 2/3 completed. On the Model 725, the raised sections of the top hood panels were taped off for accenting these sections in black. On the Model 87, the bonnet was fit atop the new boiler, and small openings were enlarged to correspond with the present top-of-boiler fitting locations.

On Thursday, March 23, nine volunteers attended, viz: Mark Bodestab (in charge), Tom Marshall, Steve Bryce, Geoff Fallows, Bob Jordan, Jim Personti, Ted Kamen, Mark Russell, and Bob Stransky.

On the '37 Packard, the hand throttle cable was reinstalled, after reducing the "kink" and lubricating well. The entire collection in the museum was dusted off for the Volunteer Open House on March 25. The steel work bench was measured for the installation of a lower shelf, but a sheet of plywood is needed to continue the job.

The top panels of the Model 725 hood were accented in black, and these panels have been returned to the car. On the Model 87, bonnet work continued with the patching of several openings near the top of the boiler, where fitting positions have been changed. The forming of the new superheater for the Model 78 was finished, and after a fitting is welded on one end, it will be ready for installation. The configuration is tricky because the firebox on top of the burner grate is so shallow. It was decided that a sheet metal shop will need to fabricate the main portion of the new horizontal flue for the Model 87. Sketches will be made to facilitate this.

Work is continuing to move the shop reorganization along, with Mark Bodestab in charge. The Auburn Valley Railroad crew is nearing completion of the redecking of the double-tracked trestle under the leadership of Bob Koury. On Saturday, there were about eight volunteers working on this project on a warm spring day.