

Tourism on the World's Largest Railroad

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Abstract:

Since early in the nineteenth century, tourism has been a vital part of railway operations, particularly in the United States. With its vast natural spaces, often devoid of settlement, passenger loadings were much lower than would be the case in Europe. Railway executives were therefore anxious to attract tourists—particularly those who were members of the emerging middle class—to fill seats on passenger trains that might otherwise have gone empty. Moreover, tourist travel offered railroad managers access to a captive audience, trapped on the train for as much as four or five days at a time. Railroad officials possessed the opportunity to educate the public on the technological wonders of rail travel, with particular reference to engineering marvels and safety features such as automatic block signaling. That sort of “education” was a critical component of efforts to convince Americans that railways were safe and efficient, and that additional government regulation was unnecessary. Finally, tourist travel offered the possibility of educating citizens and visitors on American history, patriotism, the economic and technological progress of the nation, etc.—this process was often linked to special fairs and events, such as the Centennial Exposition (1876), the Sesquicentennial Exposition (1926), and the Century of Progress Exposition (1933-34). Because the United States was a relatively new nation, railroad executives believed it was important to teach these attributes to all Americans, and especially recent immigrants, in order to inculcate a sense of Americanness and to undermine the appeal of socialism, communism, or other alternatives to capitalism.

While examining American railway tourism in general, this paper will focus on the Pennsylvania Railroad (PRR), the largest railway in the United States, and between 1881 and 1901 the largest private corporation in the world. The Pennsylvania Railroad transported far more passengers than any other American company, and as such was heavily involved in tourism. Early efforts included the issuance of guidebooks and the provision of hotels for travelers, at a time when railway travel was still quite primitive. By the late nineteenth century, the PRR was offering sophisticated travel guides and organized group tours, designed to appeal to middle-class tourists—as well as deluxe tours in private cars for wealthy Americans and visiting foreign dignitaries. Early in the twentieth century, the PRR sponsored tours to many fairs and exhibitions, designed to impress travelers with the nation's economic and technological progress. By the 1930s, when the Great Depression sharply reduced passenger travel, the PRR even offered special excursions for the first generation of railfans, people who were willing to pay to travel over an obscure section of line for purposes of enjoyment, rather than transportation. In all of these endeavors, PRR officials were of course anxious to earn revenue for their company, but they were also determined to teach specific lessons regarding American history, American government, and American life to their captive audience of tourists.

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As customer-driven businesses, railways have long sought to attract tourists and other discretionary travelers. It could be argued that such advertisements have proven successful in some markets (Europe and Japan) at ensuring that large numbers of people travel by train, rather than competing modes of transport. In the United States, however, it is clear that most intercity travelers (in excess of 98 percent) use modes of transport other than the railways. In that context, it is plausible to assume that American railways have been less successful with their advertising and promotional campaigns than is the case in Europe. This paper aims to test that hypothesis, based on the example of the Pennsylvania Railroad (PRR), the largest railroad in the United States, and one that offered substantially more passenger service than any other railroad. By examining the mechanisms that PRR officials employed during the period 1900 to 1960, in an effort to increase passenger revenues, it may be possible to determine whether inadequate promotional campaigns contributed to the secular decline of passenger service in the United States during that period.

The PRR's earliest efforts at self-promotion involved participation in fairs and exhibitions, rather than direct visual advertising to the traveling public. By the early twentieth century, the PRR's officials had already demonstrated a renewed commitment to public displays, and in a far different manner than the efforts associated with the 1893 Columbian Exposition. During the first decade of the twentieth century, the PRR participated in several exhibitions that depicted technological modernity to a greater degree than anything that had come before, or since. To a certain degree, the emphasis on technical prowess was a reaction to the anti-corporatism of the Progressive Era, at a time when many Americans—and their elected officials—demanded greater regulatory oversight of the railroads and other big businesses. By showing the public that railroads were solicitous of the public interest, many executives hoped that they could deflect some of that regulatory impulse and preserve a measure of corporate autonomy. However, it should also be noted that the PRR was reaching the pinnacle of its engineering prowess, and in that context it was hardly surprising that the company's exhibits reflected that situation. Particularly under the leadership of President Alexander J. Cassatt (1899-1906), the railroad made massive investments in bridges, additional tracks, low-grade freight lines, signaling systems, and other mechanisms for accommodating rapidly escalating freight traffic. Those investments culminated in the construction of the New York Improvements, a project that included tunnels under the Hudson and East rivers, as well as the massive Pennsylvania Station in Manhattan. Under such circumstances, it would have been inconceivable for PRR officials *not* to have emphasized their achievements, regardless of the regulatory climate.¹

The most obvious example of the PRR's new technological exhibitionism occurred at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis. Frank D. Casanave, the former general superintendent of motive power on Lines East, and Edward D. Nelson, the railroad's engineer of tests, took charge of the PRR exhibit. Some of the displays illustrated the PRR's efforts to establish cordial relations with engine crews and other skilled workers, while preventing the development of powerful independent labor unions. Accordingly, there were promotional displays describing various programs of welfare capitalism, including a depiction of a railroad-sponsored YMCA reading room and information on the Voluntary Relief Department, the Pension Department, and the Employees' Saving Fund.²

¹ This is a point made by Steven W. Usselman, *Regulating Railroad Innovation: Business, Technology, and Politics in America, 1840-1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002)

² Information on the PRR displays is from *The Pennsylvania Railroad System at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition, Locomotive Tests and Exhibits* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania Railroad, 1905).

The emphasis on welfare capitalism was something of a sideshow, however, that did little to distract visitors from the lavish displays of modern railroad technology. As such, there was much more coherence at St. Louis in 1904 than there had been in Chicago in 1893, with little tension between depictions of the PRR's nostalgic past and predictions for its glorious future. There was an imported French DeGlehn four-cylinder compound locomotive, part of a series of trials and unsuccessful experiments to apply compound technology to PRR locomotives. There were maps of the PRR system, illustrating the massive betterment programs that were part of the Cassatt administration. A large model of the Philadelphia yard and terminal facilities suggested the investments that the PRR had made in its headquarters city. Even more impressive was a series of displays relating to the New York Improvements. They included a large model of Penn Station and a section of cast-iron lining for the tunnels under the Hudson River. The displays demonstrated nothing if not engineering practicality—the depiction of Penn Station was the architects' model, made public for the first time, while the section of tunnel lining would be stored after the exposition and used, two years later, as the last ring in the south tunnel under the Hudson River. Most notably, the test plant was disassembled, returned to the Altoona shops, and for decades provided PRR motive-power engineers with data that influenced new locomotive designs.

A massive locomotive test plant constituted the highlight of the PRR display at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition. The planning and construction of the test plant began in 1902, as PRR motive power officials were engaged in the development of a new generation of powerful steam locomotives. In that context, it was eminently logical that the PRR's Department of Chemical and Physical Tests should display their latest efforts to design locomotives through rigorous scientific analysis, rather than through the traditional methods that relied on trial and error, tradition, and the dissemination of key knowledge through apprenticeship programs. The locomotive tests—particularly those conducted at high speeds—proved immensely popular with attendees, and provided a superb opportunity for PRR personnel to impress the public. The modernity of the test plant was in any case a far cry from the (equally popular, it should be noted) voyage of the *John Bull* from Philadelphia to Chicago, as part of the Columbian Exposition.³

The locomotive test plant, the PRR Board noted, would “illustrate better than could be done in any other way the progressive tendency of the Pennsylvania System.”⁴ The Louisiana Purchase Exposition took place at the height of the Progressive Era, at the end of a huge merger wave that had awakened many Americans to the perceived dangers of unbridled capitalism, while the Interstate Commerce Commission was investigating alleged favoritism in the PRR's allocation of coal cars and while Congress was debating what would become the most sweeping changes in railroad regulation since the passage of the 1887 Act to Regulate Commerce. At a time when shippers' attorney Louis D. Brandeis created shock waves of publicity with his famous (if inaccurate) assertion that the railroads could save a million dollars a day through increased efficiency, PRR officials were eager to demonstrate that they ran their railroad scientifically and efficiently. With farmers on the Great Plains clamoring for increased railroad regulation and lower rates, the western gateway city of St. Louis offered a superb venue for PRR personnel to demonstrate the Railroad's commitment to use its revenues as efficiently as possible, in order to provide the best transportation service available. If ever the Pennsylvania Railroad needed favorable publicity, now was the time.⁵

³ Pennsylvania Railroad Company, *Locomotive Testing Plant at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition, St. Louis, Missouri, U.S.A.* (s.n., 1904); Usselman, *Regulating Railroad Innovation*, 242-48.

⁴ Theodore N. Ely, “Louisiana Purchase Exposition, St. Louis, 1904,” June 10, 1903, PRR Board Papers, quoted in Usselman, *Regulating Railroad Innovation*, 248.

⁵Usselman, *Regulating Railroad Innovation*, 211, 242-48, 341, 354. Usselman emphasizes the role of public displays of technology (and, for that matter, the construction of the New York Improvements) as a mechanism employed by PRR officials to dampen down calls for additional regulation. There is no doubt that railroad executives were aware of the

The PRR's exhibits at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition garnered two grand prizes (for the Penn Station model and the engineering display that featured the locomotive test plant and the mock-up of the Hudson tunnel). Gold medals honored the DeGlehn four-cylinder balanced compound locomotive, as well as the PRR's efforts in welfare capitalism.⁶ Yet, despite the test plant and the tunnel lining, PRR officials seem to have been so anxious to demonstrate their engineering achievements that they lost sight of the need to impress visitors who were by and large not engineers. The PRR's exhibit included such details as "this map illustrated a change of line for four tracks, 13,866 feet long, making a savings of 1,704 feet in distance and a reduction in change of direction of 254° 27'. The sharpest curve on the former line was 5° 30', and on the present line 0° 30'."⁷ That information indicated a commitment to an engineering ethos, and not a desire to sway public opinion by portraying the romance of the rails.

While the test plant went to Altoona, the railroad stored many of the remaining exhibits in boxcars, ready to be shipped anywhere, anytime. The New York Improvements display reappeared in 1907, at the poorly attended Jamestown Ter-Centennial Exposition, then again two years later at the Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition in Seattle, where it garnered another gold medal.⁸

The PRR's next major exhibit took place at the 1926 Sesqui-Centennial International Exposition in Philadelphia. Planning began in 1921, but the project was hobbled by disorganization, budget cuts, the resignation of the first director, and the death of the second director, shortly before opening day. The PRR contributed \$125,000 (considerably less than the \$190,000 that the company spent at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition), but the money was insufficient to make up the overall funding shortfall, or to create a popular or prosperous world's fair. Thanks to poor publicity and an unusually wet summer (it rained 107 of the 184 days that the fair was open), attendance barely topped 6.4 million visitors, half of the anticipated total, and the exposition eventually entered receivership. The few visitors who did attend were likely to be disappointed by the limited size of the exposition. Nor could they have been much impressed by displays such as the one supplied by the Pennsylvania Paint, Oil, and Varnish Club, "demonstrating the beauty, decorative and protective value of paints, enamels and lacquers."⁹

The PRR exhibit was extraordinarily modest, and covered only about 5,000 square feet. The highlight, if it could be called that, was a massive canvas painting, measuring 20 feet by 100 feet, of a PRR steel passenger car, a technology introduced nearly twenty years earlier. Other, smaller paintings depicted the interior of the passenger car, various stations, and a representative section of four-track main line. There was also a small model of the four-track main line, all of sixty-nine feet in length, with model trains shuttling back and forth. Two of the trains depicted modern freight and passenger equipment, while the other two illustrated the cars and locomotives employed during the

potential value of exhibitions and other forms of publicity, in that regard. However, I differ with Usselman, in my assertion that a desire to facilitate traffic motivated the implementation of investments such as the New York Improvements, and that the display of cutting-edge civil and mechanical engineering technology at exhibitions was more in the nature of an understandable attempt to "show off" a series of commendable technical achievements.

⁶ PRR, "Medals received from the Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis," June 27, 1907, Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, Delaware, RG 1810, (hereafter, HML), Box 609, folder 30.

⁷ *The Pennsylvania Railroad System at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition*, 15.

⁸ PRR, Third Vice President's Office, "Jamestown Exposition," July 2, 1907; "Pennsylvania Railroad System's Exhibit at the Alaska - Yukon - Pacific Exposition," 1909; PRR press release, December 15, 1909; all in HML, Box 609, folder 30.

⁹ James D. Ristine, *Philadelphia's 1926 Sesqui-Centennial International Exposition* (Charleston, S.C.: Arcadia Publishing, 2009), 7-8; Erastus Long Austin and Odell Hauser, *The Sesqui-Centennial International Exposition* (Current Publications, 1929), 326-327, quote at 327; *The Pennsylvania Railroad at the Sesquicentennial International Exposition, Philadelphia 1926* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania Railroad, 1926)

1860s. Realism, one report noted, “was further heightened by running the model trains at different rates of speed.”¹⁰ There were additional models of a Conestoga wagon, a pioneering steam locomotive developed by John Stevens, and an early sleeping car. Even though the exposition was located only about two miles from the PRR’s corporate headquarters, and was bisected by PRR tracks, the railroad’s officials elected not to supply any actual, full-sized railway equipment. The only train that was accessible to visitors operated over a miniature railway that circled the exposition grounds. Nor was there any sense that the PRR was involved in innovative new technology—which was just as well, as the failed exposition was a poor showcase for the City of Philadelphia, and for all of the exhibitors.

The PRR’s efforts at public display peaked during the depression years of the 1930s, at a time when corporate executives and civic boosters sought to reassure the American people that the economic hardship was but a temporary impediment to American progress. Two massive fairs—the 1933-34 Century of Progress Exposition and the 1939-40 New York World’s Fair boasted some of the most elaborate displays in the history of the railroad industry, and the PRR certainly contributed its share to each. However, by the 1930s PRR officials were no longer interested in showcasing the contributions of their railroad; instead, they were content to allow industry-wide trade organizations—most notably the Association of American Railroads—the opportunity to develop the exhibits. In the process, PRR executives relinquished whatever opportunity they might have possessed to shape favorable publicity for their company.

The Century of Progress Exposition celebrated Chicago’s centennial, and, despite its title, many of the railroad exhibits there evoked the past far more than the imagined future. That was certainly true for the PRR, whose exhibits were less ambitious, and certainly much smaller, than had been the case at the Columbian Exposition in 1893. Even though John Elfreth Watkins had been dead for more than thirty years, the design of the PRR display reflected his vision of the evolution of mobility, from primitive to modern. A carved wooden frieze depicted various modes of transportation, from an Indian travois to a Conestoga wagon and a stagecoach to the *John Bull* to a modern steam locomotive. The full-sized *John Bull* was back in Chicago, forty years after the Columbian Exposition, although by 1933 it was no longer operational, and sat on static display. In what had become a typical admixture of the nostalgic past and the high-tech future, the exhibit also featured the PRR’s latest advances in position light cab signaling technology, and included a replica of a steam locomotive cab complete with signal indicators. The remainder of the exhibit consisted of an odd assortment of ephemera, including a cross-section of PRR roadbed and several paintings, three of which had been used for the railroad’s annual calendars. Even though the PRR’s promotional booklet for the fair emphasized the monumental electrification project then under way along the eastern seaboard, that technology did not appear in the exhibit.¹¹ The PRR’s static displays could not match the contributions of other railroads to the Exposition’s “Wings of a Century” pageant, including the New York Central’s record-setting speedster, *No. 999* or the entire train sets (including the Union Pacific *M-10000* and the Burlington *Zephyr*).¹²

Despite the limited nature of the PRR’s Chicago exhibits, company officials were anxious to stress the railroad’s benefits to the American people. A souvenir booklet that accompanied the PRR

¹⁰ Austin and Hauser, *Philadelphia’s 1926 Sesqui-Centennial*, 327.

¹¹ Pennsylvania Railroad, *100 Years of Progress in Modern Railroading*, 1933, HML; Dan Cupper, *Crossroads of Commerce: The Pennsylvania Calendar Art of Grif Teller* (Mechanicsburg, Pa: Stackpole Books, 2003), 94.

¹² In 1893, the New York Central’s 999 allegedly reached a speed of 112 ½ miles per hour, while pulling the Empire State Express, but there is no conclusive evidence that the locomotive ever reached that speed—and, in any event, the contemporary press paid little attention to the event. Tommy Meehan, “Fact or Fable?,” *Railroad History* 196 (Spring—Summer 2007): 47-49.

displays attested to the size and the power of the PRR system, still the largest transportation company in the United States, as measured by total capitalization, number of shareholders, passenger miles, and freight ton-miles. As in the exhibitions that took place during the first decade of the twentieth century, PRR officials emphasized the technical complexity of the New York Improvements. A new project, the widespread electrification of the routes between New York and Washington, and from Philadelphia west to Harrisburg, also featured prominently in the souvenir booklet. Phrases such as “public service” and “contributions to work and prosperity” appeared frequently, along with emphasis on the number of jobs that the railroad provided and the amount of tax revenue that it generated.

The Pennsylvania Railroad exhibit in the Travel and Transport Building also included four dioramas, one for each season, with Spring representing agriculture; Summer, vacation travel; Autumn, factories and steel mills; and winter, a lumber camp of the type rarely served by the PRR, except in the northern reaches of Michigan. Model trains traversed a four-track mainline in front of each diorama, intended to “symbolize the fact that railroads operate night and day and in all seasons, giving the only dependable, continuous form of transportation.” The exhibit also emphasized that the PRR was “looking forward to a full co-ordination of all means of transportation,” demonstrating commitment to intermodality by featuring steamships, car ferries, trucks, buses, and airplanes.¹³

That feature was perhaps the most forward-looking aspect of the PRR exhibit, although it illustrated developments in coordinated transportation management, rather than transportation technology. The locomotive test plant, the central feature of the Louisiana Purchase Exposition, was nowhere to be seen. A year before the Century of Progress Exposition opened, a West Coast railway equipment supplier had requested, and received, blueprints for the locomotive test plant, which it intended to recreate in model form. Perhaps sensing that a mere model of the mighty test plant would have all of the popular appeal of a small and timid elephant, the Railroad took no further interest in the matter. That era of public relations had ended, and the PRR had moved on.¹⁴

The New York suburbs on Long Island lay at the opposite outer extremity of the PRR system from Chicago and, strictly speaking, the railroad did not actually serve them at all, relying instead on its Long Island Rail Road subsidiary. But when planning began for the 1939 World’s Fair, PRR officials were determined to play a leading role in the festivities.

This was not the first attempt to host a fair on Long Island. A quarter-century earlier, both the LIRR and the PRR had opposed plans for a similar exhibition, at a time when the New York Improvements offered a far better display of progress and modernity than any fair exhibit. In 1910, Charles Stewart Davison, a successful Manhattan attorney, had proposed a world’s fair on Long Island, to be followed in succeeding years by a permanent exposition. Neither civic leaders nor business interests would support Davison’s proposals—perhaps because he was a virulent anti-Semite, an advocate of a near-total ban on immigration, and an outspoken proponent of eugenics.¹⁵ Having failed to win public support, Davison appealed to electrical engineer George Gibbs, whose involvement in both the New York Improvements and suburban electrification made him an obvious liaison with the PRR. Davison believed that “the [Pennsylvania] railroad company was in a position where it could

¹³“One Hundred Years: Progress in Modern Railroading Shown by Pennsylvania Railroad,” *The Mutual Magazine*, September 1933, 18-21.

¹⁴ “Wings of a Century: Transportation Pageant Attracts at Chicago,” *The Mutual Magazine*, July 1934, 29-30; P. G. Sanborn to William Wallace Atterbury, May 3, 1932; F. W. Hankins to F. M. Waring, May 10, 1932; Waring to Hankins, May 17, 1932; all in HML, Box 609, folder 6.

¹⁵ Jonathan Peter Spiro, *Defending the Master Race: Conservation, Eugenics, and the Legacy of Madison Grant* (Lebanon, N.H.: University Press of New England, 2009), 143-44.

practically take the exposition company by the throat,” and browbeat civic officials into supporting his plans¹⁶ In spite of his efforts, however, PRR and LIRR officials were adamant that they simply had “too much work to do in the next three years to permit of diverting any of [their] energies towards preparing for a World’s Fair,” noting that a \$3.6 million investment would be necessary (including the acquisition of at least two hundred electric suburban cars), and would overload the newly completed Penn Station and East River tunnels.¹⁷

By the late 1930s, however, PRR officials were far more receptive to suggestions that they participate in a fair on Long Island. The novelty of Penn Station had worn off, the structure was grimy and very much in need of a cleaning, and its cavernous halls echoed with the voices of too-few passengers. The railroad industry itself seemed outdated, emblematic of the old smokestack industries that were out of touch with the new emphasis modernity and Art Deco streamlining. In that context, the New York World’s Fair, with its emphasis on the creation of a “World of Tomorrow,” provided an opportunity for PRR officials to emphasize that railroads—despite the development of highways and airships—were not relics of the past.

The seventeen-acre railroad exhibit at the New York World’s Fair, sponsored by the Eastern Railroad President’s Conference (after 1934, the Association of American Railroads), included an exhibit area, “Building the Railroads,” and two “performances,” “Railroads on Parade” and “Railroads at Work.”¹⁸ The fair thus provided the PRR with a chance to showcase its next generation public relations campaign, highlighted by its newly retained public relations expert, Raymond Loewy. The PRR took the lead in developing the Railroad Building at the Fair, and Loewy served as the “Industrial Designer” of the building and its exhibits, with Gibbs & Hill assuming the role of Consulting Engineers.¹⁹ Among other projects, Loewy designed the paint scheme for the DD-1 electric locomotives that would haul passengers to the Long Island Rail Road World’s Fair Station, created a model railroad display for the interior of the Railroad Building, and even devised a paper model locomotive that visitors could take home as a souvenir of their visit.²⁰ Historic preservationist Anita Pins is certainly correct in her assertion that “‘The World of Tomorrow’ at the 1939 Fair was as much an advertising campaign for the Pennsylvania Railroad as it was a one-man show for the industrial designer.”²¹

Nonetheless, the PRR’s exhibits, like those associated with the entire railroad industry display, suggested the past, far more than they did any “World of Tomorrow.” PRR officials began planning its exhibits for the Fair in August 1938, when the railroad’s superintendent of motive power began searching the roster for any old locomotives that might have somehow escaped the scrapper. An H-3 Consolidation turned up at a stone quarry, and was soon restored at Altoona, along with a train of passenger cars, mostly taken out of work service. A wooden combination car that had perhaps been used as a pay car on the predecessor Cumberland Valley Railroad joined the collection. The Camden and Amboy’s *John Bull* was still in existence, albeit heavily modified and inoperable. It was nonetheless employed during the 1939 fair season, either on static display or else being pulled along by a steel cable. That autumn, PRR shop forces at Altoona constructed a replica of the *John Bull*,

¹⁶Charles Stuart Davison to George Gibbs, March 7, 1910, HML, Box 609, folder 30.

¹⁷Ralph Peters to Samuel Rea, March 8, 1910, HML, Box 609, folder 30.

¹⁸Robert L. Emerson, “The Pennsylvania Railroad Historical Collection, 1939-1989,” *Milepost* 7 (Summer 1989): 3.

¹⁹Loewy received a \$15,000 fee, while Gibbs & Hill earned two percent of the building’s \$97,438 cost.

²⁰J. V. B. Duer to F. W. Hankins, June 14, 1939, HML, Box 609, folder 4; Chuck Blardone, “Raymond Loewy PRR Project Listing,” *The Keystone* 24 (Spring 1991): 54-58.

²¹Anita Pins, “Streamlining After a One-Man Show,” *The Keystone* 24 (Spring 10991): 48-49.

used during the 1940 season and now in the collection of the Railroad Museum of Pennsylvania, at Strasburg.²²

In keeping with the theme of “The World of Tomorrow,” the PRR also contributed some more modern equipment, although the modernity had more to do with the image created by streamlining than with cutting-edge technology. One of Loewy’s streamlined K-4 Pacific locomotives, #3768, appeared at the fair. Loewy’s aerodynamically designed S-1 steam turbine occupied a prominent exterior space, spinning its drivers in perpetual stagnation, its wheels suspended on rollers an inch above the rails.²³ The locomotive test plant displayed at St. Louis would at least have a practical application at Altoona, but the S-1 was pure public relations, a monstrosity that could not even operate on most parts of the PRR system. The railroad’s mechanical engineers had little choice but to lengthen and strengthen the Altoona Test Plant to evaluate the S-1’s performance – not for freight or passenger service, but to “fix up the plant for the use of one engine, having in mind that we will get the use of the one at the New York World’s Fair eventually.”²⁴ Getting the locomotive to the fair would be another matter, as officials from the Motive Power Department noted that “nothing [had] been done to eliminate the restricted clearances on the main line both East and West of Altoona.”²⁵ As such, the S-1 traveled a roundabout path to the fair, bypassing New York City by traveling on the tracks of the New York Central (NYC)—a final indignity perhaps, but one that was unavoidable, as the locomotive was far too bulky to fit through the Hudson and East River tunnels. The S-1 may have impressed designers with its “hemispheric” smoke box, but PRR employees often referred to it as the “torpedo.” More lascivious-minded fairgoers promptly dubbed the locomotive “Mae West” – perhaps not the precise form, or function, that Loewy was attempting to convey.

The “Railroads on Parade” performance, often referred to simply as the “Pageant,” was a seventy-minute extravaganza featuring full-size, historically significant operating locomotives and cars. PRR officials emphasized, “Railroads on Parade” would “not merely show railroad equipment or . . . historic transportation scenes . . . but would show the intimate and personal touch that the railroad today has for every citizen of America. . . . This is a brand new feature and one which should be stressed.”²⁶ Visitors could pay a quarter for general admission, or fifty-five cents for box seats in an arena that could seat four thousand. Ironically, Loewy’s archrival, industrial designer Henry Dreyfuss collaborated with journalist turned public-relations expert Edward Hungerford²⁷ to head the fair’s “Sub-Committee on Pageant Drama,” which choreographed the performance. The production included actors and locomotives, all moving to the melodies of Jerome Kern and George Gershwin. Act One introduced New York as “The Gateway of a New Empire,” while the second act featured pioneering locomotives, including the *Stourbridge Lion*, the *Best Friend of Charleston*, and

²²Emerson, “The Pennsylvania Railroad Historical Collection,” 3-4.

²³The rollers themselves provided better service to the PRR than the locomotive that they carried – they were returned to Altoona and added to the locomotive test plant. J. V. B. Duer to Carl Breer et al., April 9, 1942; Breer to Duer, April 27, 1942; both in HML, Box 609, folder 6.

²⁴J. V. B. Duer to F. W. Hankins, June 14, 1939, HML, Box 609, folder 4.

²⁵L. B. Jones to Hankins, June 22, 1939; HML, Box 609, folder 4.

²⁶Despite the success of the pageant at the 1933-34 Century of Progress Exposition in Chicago, Dreyfuss and Hungerford concluded that “‘Pageant’ is a fine word, but its connotation is unfortunate, because of its misuse in so many instances—either in being applied to long dreary, pretentious outdoor plays or ‘spectacles’; or else to very small and exceedingly unpretentious ones done indoors by high schools, Sunday schools and the like.” “Report of Sub-Committee on Pageant Drama,” May 26, 1937, HML, Box 1525, folder 21.

²⁷Earlier, Hungerford had produced the 1927 “Fair of the Iron Horse” and the “Wings of a Century” Pageant at the 1933 Century of Progress Exposition. Frank P. Donovan, Jr., *The Railroad in Literature: A Brief Survey of Railroad Fiction, Poetry, Songs, Biography, Essays, Travel and Drama in the English Language, Particularly Emphasizing its Place in American Literature* (Boston: The Railway and Locomotive Historical Society, 1940), 104.

the *Tom Thumb*, among others. Act Three depicted the Overland Trail, complete with a stagecoach, a scene in which “Mr. Lincoln Rides the Railroad,” and another featuring the driving of the golden spike at Promontory Point, Utah. The next act represented an attempt to humanize rail travel, with vignettes set in a small-town depot and in “a large railroad station in the metropolitan city of New York,” in a day coach, and in a Pullman sleeping car. The final act featured “the Little Red Caboose” (provided by the PRR) and demonstrated “the Railroad Under Test,” with a modern signaling system protecting passengers. The show ended with an epilogue—“Railroads Triumphant”—that showed in rapid-fire succession the evolution of railway technology over the previous century. In short, “Railroads on Parade” was a stage version of the displays that had appeared at earlier venues, going back to the Columbian Exposition in 1893, with a mixture of nostalgia and an assertion that the future held great promise for modern and technologically progressive railroads.²⁸

While the General Motors Futurama exhibit attracted considerably more attention, the railroads also offered a miniaturized version of the world, albeit one that was contemporary, rather than set twenty years in the future. The “Railroads at Work” display cost more than a quarter of a million dollars to build and operate, and most of this was a write-off, despite a ten-cent admission fee. The PRR heavily advertised the exhibit, with illustrated leaflets and scrip books, sold at ticket offices.²⁹ At the Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis, the PRR had provided two displays—the locomotive test plant and the tunnel lining—that had towered over visitors. But now, visitors could tower over a miniature version of the PRR and its competitors, where what counted was the ability of the railroad industry to “Work”—it was the depression, after all—and not its ability to demonstrate its technological prowess.³⁰

By the 1930s, and despite the Depression, some Americans enjoyed sufficient free time and disposable income to become railfans, riding trains for sheer enjoyment, and photographing the more unusual aspects of the shrinking railroad network. Many railfans joined the National Railway Historical Society. Founded in 1935, the NRHS attracted a very different audience than the old railroad traffic clubs, which served as professional forums for railroad managers. The Pennsylvania was one of the first railroads to appreciate that railfans could generate additional revenue and build considerable goodwill toward the Railroad in the process. Its executives agreed with the editors of *Railway Age*, who understood that “The railroads’ problem is very largely one of public relations” that called for “vigor and imagination in the creation and stimulation of a genuine ‘fan’ interest in the details of railroad equipment, construction and operation,” thus “making friends for the railroads.”³¹

Robert G. Lewis, who many years later became the editor of *Railway Age*, took a job as a messenger for the PRR in 1934, and soon afterwards organized the Railroad’s excursion program. On July 12, 1936, the Railroad sponsored its first “Off the Beaten Track” excursion, co-sponsored by the Philadelphia Branch of the NRHS, attracting more than two hundred passengers. A second excursion, six weeks later, attracted more than five hundred riders, who spent thirteen hours covering 270 miles of track in eastern Pennsylvania, much of which did not see regular passenger service. The following spring, nearly two thousand railfans toured the Altoona Works, arriving on special trains from New York, Philadelphia, Chicago, and Pittsburgh. Not surprisingly, the first stop

²⁸“Bill of the Play: Railroads on Parade: A Pageant-Drama of Transport.”

²⁹PRR employees could buy twelve-ticket scrip books for one dollar, then resell individual tickets for ten cents apiece, yielding a twenty-cent profit. Vice President – Operations to R. C. Morse, et al., August 2, 1939; W. R. Triem, PRR Scrip Book Sales Committee, August 2, 1939; both in HML, Box 1525, folder 21.

³⁰“New York World’s Fair – 1939, W. D. W. File,” HML, Box 1525, folder 18.

³¹*Railway Age* 101:14 (October 3, 1936), 469.

included tours of the PRR's modern public-relations staples, the locomotive test plant and the chemical, physical, and electrical laboratories. Fans also received souvenir booklets, and had the opportunity to see a wide variety of modern and historic equipment. Another trip, earlier that year, had allowed fans to tour both the new Baldwin Locomotive Works plant at Eddystone, Pennsylvania and the PRR electrical shops a few miles south, in Wilmington, Delaware. The excursions continued for the next several decades, interrupted only by the war. On October 20, 1957, L-1 Mikado No. 520 powered the last steam excursion, which included a rare visit to the preserved locomotives at Northumberland.³²

While national and international expositions offered PRR executives a chance to showcase their railroad's services, such opportunities were few and far between. On a day-to-day basis, therefore, PRR managers relied more extensively on the visual media to entice tourists and to attract additional passenger business. This took the form of calendar art and other efforts to create a generally favorable public impression of the railroad – particularly valuable as the federal and state regulatory regimes became ever more stringent during the early decades of the twentieth century. The PRR also employed advertising posters, in a more focused effort to attract tourist travel and shape tourists' choices of destination, as well as their expectations of what they should see and why they should see it.

Numerous artists received commissions from the PRR, illustrating timetables, dining-car menus, and newspaper and magazine ads. Some artists romanticized past associations with the Pennsylvania Railroad, no matter how tenuous – such as a “Merry Christmas” poster depicting Washington overlooking Valley Forge, many decades before PRR passed through the area. Others alluded to modernity and the Railroad's progressive outlook – including marketing art showing a TAT Trimotor racing the *Airway Limited*, a scene that never actually occurred. Other art linked the Railroad to newsworthy contemporary events, including a 1930 *Saturday Evening Post* Ad that depicted a train that few Americans would ever use – a dedicated racehorse express named for the latest equine sports hero, Man O' War.

Ultimately, however, calendars provided the best known and most widely disseminated artistic depictions of the Pennsylvania Railroad. A Philadelphia firm, Ketterlinus, issued the first known PRR calendars in 1914, 1915, and 1916, and each featured the same colorized image of the *Broadway Limited*. The issuance of calendars then seems to have been temporarily suspended, perhaps as result of wartime economy measures and the imposition of federal control. By the mid-1920s the Railroad was again willing to commission calendar art, in keeping with the emphasis on good public relations that Ivy Lee and the J. Walter Thompson firm had recently introduced. Each year between 1925 and 1958, the Pennsylvania Railroad distributed large wall calendars to station agents, shippers, and, on request, to members of the general public as well. These were typically lithographed as a single, large, full-color image, sometimes with all twelve months printed directly on the calendar, and occasionally with smaller images and monthly tear-off sheets. As with many other elements associated with the Railroad's public relations, the idea for the calendars came from an outside firm. The Osborne Company specialized in art calendars, producing as many as three hundred customized designs each year, along with Christmas cards, desk blotters, pens, and similar promotional items. Most of the artwork was generic, drawn from Osborne's vast archives, with only the PRR and a few other large clients in a position to demand truly unique products. Compare to an

³²*Railway Age* 101:9 (August 29, 1936), 325-26; 102:15 (April 10, 1937), 630; 102:21 (May 22, 1937), 885, 892, October 2004, Robert G. Lewis, *Off the Beaten Track: A Railroader's Life in Pictures* (New York: Simmons-Boardman, 2004); Robert L. Emerson, *The Pennsylvania Railroad Historical Collection, 1939-1989*, 5; John C. Paige, *A Special History Study: Pennsylvania Railroad Shops and Works, Altoona, Pennsylvania* (Washington, D.C.: United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1989), 31.

average order of less than a thousand dollars, Osborne's PRR account brought in more than \$100,000 per year by the 1950s, for some 300,000 calendars.³³

The Osborne Company had been producing calendars for the New York Central since 1922, and two years later Osborne's president, William H. Seely, envisioning an even larger account, approached the PRR. The Railroad granted the commission to Osborne, which quickly dropped the NYC as a client. Harold M. Brett had perfected his craft under the tutelage of Howard Pyle. He had already executed several commissions for Osborne, so he was the logical choice to prepare the art for the first PRR calendar, for 1925. *Speed and Security* depicted familiar icons of the PRR, with a K-4 Pacific powering the *Broadway Limited* across the Rockville Bridge. The composition set the tone for most of the calendar and advertising art that would follow, since, as historian Dan Cupper notes, it offered a "low-angle head-on perspective with a single fast-approaching train that implied substance, speed, and safety." The calendar was so popular that the PRR employed the same illustration the following year, simply changing the train from the *Broadway Limited* to the *New Yorker*. The Railroad also used the same basic image on wallet calendars, postcards, playing cards, timetable covers, dining-car menus, promotional materials (including one translated into German), magazine advertisements, and even the embossing on twenty-five, forty, and fifty-year service pins. The Campbell Soup Company even borrowed the painting (not difficult to do, given that the Dorrance family, which controlled the soup manufacturer, had a representative on the PRR Board) for one of their magazine ads. The connection between trains and soup was probably tenuous, at best, but Campbell's suggested that "Occasionally a product—just as a transportation service—rises so high in quality that the public, consciously or unconsciously, accepts it as standard." In a railroad, it was the PRR and the *Broadway Limited*. "In a soup, it is Campbell's." The ad certainly linked the aspirations of ordinary Americans to the wealth and luxury represented by the *Broadway Limited*, yet it also listed a price (twelve cents a can) that was certainly of little interest to those who could actually afford to travel on the PRR's finest train. After reusing the 1925 image the following year, for the 1927 calendar Brett once again turned to the PRR's flagship train as inspiration for *The Broad Way of Commerce*. Subtitled *The Broad Way Limited Passing Through the Steel District*, the nighttime scene depicted the train passing through Pittsburgh, its flanks lit by the hellish glow of the steel mills that were that city's trademark. The only other sources of light emanate from the locomotive's headlight, the stars, and, mimicking them, the distant twinkle of the PRR's position-light signals, keeping its passengers safe.³⁴

After that, the torch was passed to one of the most famous railroad artists of all time. Born in New Jersey in 1899, Griffith Teller demonstrated an early aptitude for art. He accepted a position at the Osborne Company in 1918 and during the nine years that followed completed at least one railroad-themes painting, for the Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Railroad. Even though Brett had received the commission to paint the image for the PRR's 1928 calendar, he had failed to complete it. With the PRR expecting the calendar art the following day, Seely turned the project over to Teller, but also assigned a second artist to complete a backup painting, just in case. *When the Broad Way Meets the Dawn* eschewed the steel mills that figured so prominently in the previous year's painting in favor of an idyllic rural scene, with the train constituting the only sign of industry and modernity. That pastoral idyll continued to resonate with residents of the Keystone State many decades later, and in 1998 it became the background for the commemorative "Preserve Our Heritage" automobile license plate.³⁵

³³Cupper, 45-51, 57-58.

³⁴Cupper, *Rockville Bridge*, 68-71, 102 (quotes); Cupper, *Crossroads of Commerce*, 59, 78-83.

³⁵Cupper, *Crossroads of Commerce*, 27-30, 84-85, 175.

After 1928, however, the PRR's flagship train rarely appeared in calendar art. More commonly, the calendars publicized the Railroad's latest equipment or service. *Harnessing the Plane to the Iron Horse* (1929) and *Giant Conquerors of Space and Time* (1931) each featured a TAT Tri-Motor flying above the *Airway Limited*, evoking the short-lived transcontinental air-rail passenger service. Teller employed a certain amount of artistic license in the first of these paintings, depicting the aircraft in a PRR keystone livery that they never actually carried. Several calendars promoted the PRR's electrification program, with a P-5a appearing in *The New Day* (1934) and its successor, a GG-1, in *Speed—Safety—Comfort* (1936). The Railroad, sensitive to public criticisms that it might be more concerned with speed than with safety, changed the title of the latter painting to *Safety First—Plus Speed-Comfort-Friendliness*. That painting also nearly ended Grif Teller's career, when the artist wandered onto the tracks in search of a better composition, and came within seconds of being flattened by his subject. After that, PRR management demanded that Teller be escorted while on Company property, lest his premature demise generate its own sort of distinctly unfavorable publicity for the Railroad. Raymond Loewy's streamlined K-4 Pacific, No. 3768, appeared in *Ready to Go!* (1937), while the next three calendars depicted the Loewy-styled S-1 in *Leaders of the Fleet of Modernism* (1939), again in *Serving the Nation* (1940), and *The Steel King* – all pulling the PRR's latest streamlined passenger equipment. *The Steel King* was reminiscent of Harold Brett's 1927 *The Broad Way of Commerce*, as Teller eschewed his long-standing affinity for rural scenes in favor of a steel mill background. A coal mine served a similar function the following year in *Partners in National Defense* (1942). That painting was distinctly different than any that preceded it, with a more perpendicular perspective, greater attention to detail, and a complete absence of passenger equipment. With the painting completed eight days after Pearl Harbor, Dan Cupper notes, the point was not to sell the Railroad to its customers, but rather to persuade the federal government that an industrious railroad need not be subjected to the same impulse toward nationalization that had characterized the previous world war.³⁶

The war years temporarily displaced Teller from the PRR account, as artists with a more patriotic flair took his place. For the Railroad's centennial in 1946, Frank J. Reilly adopted a split-panel perspective, and *One Hundred Years* showed examples of historic PRR steam locomotives underneath a lineup that included a GG-1, a Q-2, a T-1 (which had first appeared a year earlier in Alexander Leydenfrost's *Power* (1945), and, most distant of all, an EMD E-7, marking the first time that such a locomotive had graced PRR calendar art. A second E-7, the Railroad's only other passenger diesel, appeared in *Working Partners* (1947), a calendar that marked Teller's return to Osborne's the PRR account. Diesels appeared in every subsequent calendar, save *Main Lines—Freight and Passenger* (1949) and *Mass Transportation* (1955), each of which depicted GG-1 locomotives, in the latter instance at the Army-Navy Game. *Crossroads of Commerce* (1953) was the last painting to feature a steam locomotive, barely discernible in the distance. While prewar calendar art had generally featured a single train, Teller's postwar paintings usually included multiple trains, reinforcing management's emphasis that theirs was a busy and productive railroad, even as freight and passenger revenues were declining. By 1950 freight trains generally outnumbered their passenger counterparts, even though the Railroad was still willing to feature the latest in passenger travel – the uncomfortable yet economical Aerotrains appeared in *Dynamic Progress* (1956), along with a far more important innovation, TrucTrain TOFC equipment. The last two calendars placed more emphasis on efficient operations than on the trains themselves, with *Vital Links to World Trade* (1956) featuring the distinctly unromantic Delaware River pier 122 ore dock and *Conway Yard* (1958) depicting its eponymous freight classification facility.³⁷

³⁶Ibid., 64, 86-113.

³⁷Ibid., 67, 70-73, 114-45.

It was that desire for efficiency that caused the PRR to radically scale back its calendar advertising, eliminating the large wall calendars in favor of those designed for desktops or wallets. Perhaps the nadir of PRR calendar art occurred in 1959, when the Railroad recycled a 1957 annual report photo that used lighted windows in the PRR's headquarters building to spell out the letters "PRR." While they lasted, however, the PRR's wall calendars constituted an invaluable public-relations tool, appealing to shippers and passengers alike. While the Railroad allowed Teller and the other calendar artists considerable artistic license, it ensured that all details followed PRR practice, even down to the number of cross arms on telegraph poles. Locations too had to be specific, particularly if they were likely to be recognized by important shippers, yet were often generic enough to appeal to a wide audience – perhaps explaining why Teller painted so many rural scenes.³⁸

Despite the success of the calendars, it was the large, full-color advertising posters that most likely attracted discretionary tourist spending, while encouraging certain types of travelers to visit certain types of destinations – for the appropriate reasons. Given the competitive nature within the American railway industry, and given the absence of state coordination and control, it should be expected that there should be profound differences in advertising posters, between the United States and other countries. This was certainly the case, particularly during the 1930s. Moreover, Pennsylvania Railroad advertisements also differed from their counterparts on other railroads, in terms of both style and content.

The earliest PRR full-color advertising posters, dating to the 1880s, provided little visual excitement, and were accordingly tied to the presumption that travelers would read one or more of the guidebooks issued by the PRR. The poster for the *New York and Chicago Limited*, for example, featured only four small illustration of the train's interior. More prominent was a listing of the destinations served by the train, along with an exhortation that "The pleasure of a tour is greatly enhanced by taking the famous" train – a clear reference to the personally conducted tours offered by the PRR's Passenger Department. The names of the general manager, Charles E. Pugh, and the general passenger agent, J. R. Wood, offered affluent passengers the reassurance that their needs would be attended to by the railroad's most senior officials. Other early PRR ads, dating to the 1920s, were more visually enticing, yet they nonetheless featured substantial blocks of text, in addition to graphics. They extolled such new PRR services as the *Broadway Limited*, as well as the complete replacement of wooden passenger cars with steel.³⁹

Despite advertisements for the *New York and Chicago Limited*, PRR executives placed little reliance on advertising posters until the 1920s. Several factors encouraged them to increase both the railroad's advertising budget and its reliance on poster art. The emergence of a consumer culture and the growth of middle-class incomes during the generally prosperous 1920s caused an upsurge in leisure travel. At the same time, prospective tourists were increasingly likely to make such trips by private automobile or by bus, rather than by train, particularly if the distance traveled was short. Thus, as the railroad's passenger revenues declined, PRR executives hoped that long distance discretionary travel would offset the irreversible losses incurred on shorter routes. Moreover, in the period following the Transportation Act of 1920 and the return of the railroads to private ownership, the Interstate Commerce Commission adopted a more powerful regulatory agenda, one that often worked to the detriment of the PRR and the other carriers. As such, PRR officials extended Ivy Lee's pre-war publicity efforts into the realm of advertising, subtly suggesting that the Pennsylvania Railroad was good for America, and in keeping with American national values. Such trends

³⁸Ibid., 64-70, 82, 142-47.

³⁹Tad Burness, *Classic Railroad Advertising: Riding the Rails Again* (Iowa, Wis.: Krause, 2001), 153-4.

continued through the post-World War II period, as well, as the railroad's poster art became more sophisticated and more emphatically targeted at middle-class travelers.

The Pennsylvania Railroad was well placed to exploit images of American identity. After all, the company served Philadelphia (its headquarters city and the birthplace of American independence), Washington (the national political capital and a symbol of American democracy), New York (the national commercial and financial capital, and the symbol of America's economic prowess), and Pittsburgh (the nation's leading industrial center, and a symbol of American big-business capitalism and its seemingly endless productive capacity). The role of famed artist and illustrator N. C. Wyeth illustrated the commitment of PRR officials to linking their railroad with great events in American History. During the late 1920s, Ivy Lee commissioned Wyeth to paint at first three, and later four iconic images for the PRR.⁴⁰ During later years, however, the PRR moved away from its commitment to history and the imagined past, and toward the more immediate and earthy concerns of middle-class tourists.

The N. C. Wyeth poster relating to Philadelphia explicitly links the "Home City of the Pennsylvania Railroad" with "Liberty," in the form of the Liberty Bell. Despite its historical setting, the illustration suggests the presence of a more modern middle-class family, consisting of a father, mother, son (who is enthusiastically patriotic), and a daughter (who is following a typical feminine trope by protecting her delicate ears from the sound of the bell). A fifth figure, like the son facing away from the viewer, is of uncertain age and identity. His white wig nonetheless suggests that he is an elderly grandparent, brought along on a "vacation" of independence.⁴¹

A later PRR travel poster, from the post-1945 period, showed almost precisely the same tableau, although brought forward into the mid-twentieth century. Five people are again present, including a father, a mother, a son, and a daughter. In this instance, however, the grey-haired man (and it is his own hair, and not a wig) is recognizably a grandparent, and holding a camera rather than a tri-cornered hat. The Liberty Bell, shorn of its original function, remains as an icon of American independence, again linked to the Pennsylvania Railroad. A much simpler ad, from roughly the same period, omits everything except the Liberty Bell, along with a distant background scene of modern Philadelphia. Rather than using a Wyeth image to link the railroad to patriotic American values, this poster merely exhorts tourists to "Go by Train" – a plea that reflects the near-total disappearance of rail passenger traffic during the decade that followed 1945. Another contemporaneous ad gives pride of place to Independence Hall, likewise set amid modern rather than historic Philadelphia, this time with the exhortation to "Go by Pennsylvania Railroad." A final ad, again using the "Go by Train" language, blends the modern with the historic. Using Independence Hall as a backdrop, it places Philadelphia's history on display, as a series of postcards that would appeal solely to tourists.

N. C. Wyeth's 1930 illustration for "Building the First White House: Washington D.C. 1798," like his efforts in Philadelphia, linked the PRR's "service" to a symbol of American democracy. During the 1930s, the railroad's illustrators moved away from historical periodization and, as they had in Philadelphia, depicted the "Modern Washington" that Wyeth had alluded to in his 1930 work. Much of this work was done by noted pin-up and calendar-girl artist Edward M. Eggleston. One version made reference to all three branches of the federal government, represented by the White House, the

⁴⁰Christine B. Podmaniczky, "The Case of the Missing White House," *Hoover Digest* 2009, No. 1.

⁴¹http://www.zazzle.com/visit_philadelphia_on_the_pennsylvania_railroad_poster-228038280876465460;
[http://www.flickr.com/photos/trialsanderrors/4089374907/;](http://www.flickr.com/photos/trialsanderrors/4089374907/)
[http://www.vintagepostersnyc.com/posters/trains/visit_philadelphia_1155.html;](http://www.vintagepostersnyc.com/posters/trains/visit_philadelphia_1155.html)
<http://www.postermountain.com/form/posters/view/8724;>

Capitol, and the Supreme Court, while also including the Washington Monument and the Lincoln Memorial – a juxtaposition that could not possibly have occurred in reality, as the buildings were separated from one another by considerable distances. There were nonetheless subtle historical references, and the label “Washington: The City Beautiful” was a clear reference to the role that PRR President Alexander J. Cassatt had played in the urban revitalization of the city during the early twentieth century, in company with Daniel Burnham, Frederick Law Olmstead, and other advocates of the City Beautiful Movement. The poster also suggested the PRR’s modernity and technological prowess, as the GG-1 electric locomotive in the foreground represented some of the most modern, powerful, and technically innovative equipment employed on American railroads. Another version, more true to Eggleston’s style, concentrates on the three buildings that represent the three branches of government. More notably, the GG-1 locomotive is gone, replaced by an attractive model alighting from a PRR passenger train – and giving an entirely different meaning to the phrase “They City Beautiful.” Sex appeal aside, compositionally the female figure is closer in style to Washington’s neoclassical architecture than the mechanical severity of the locomotive that she replaced.⁴²

Eggleston’s talent for sexually provocative art was best displayed in several PRR posters advertising travel to Atlantic City. Then a fashionable vacation resort, Atlantic City – much like Las Vegas today – made no pretense of attracting families, or of making any claim to historical authenticity or the grandeur of democracy. Instead, Eggleston’s posters display a fashionable young couple enjoying a romantic evening of dancing and, even more suggestively, views of scantily clad bathing beauties frolicking in the surf. By the postwar period, however, Atlantic City had become a more down-market and family oriented destination, and PRR executives likewise presumed that fashionable young couples would travel to the seaside by car, rather than by rail. Accordingly, Postwar PRR advertisements attempted to attract family tourists, with depictions of children, rather than bathing beauties.⁴³

Not surprisingly, European travel posters also featured beach scenes. Interestingly, however, whether depicting adults or children, they presented a distinctly softer and more impressionistic view of life on the beach. In general, British travel posters offered a far more restrained depiction of life on the beach than was the case on the Continent. Whether owing to the colder weather or to an emphasis on familial values, British railway posters more often depicted families or children. French and other European posters, in contrast, often depicted scantily clad bathing beauties. In that sense, PRR posters bridged both the British and the Continental themes – although, more precisely, the PRR’s posters evolved from the Continental model (in the prewar period) to the British model (after 1945) as fewer and fewer affluent travelers went by train, leaving that mode of transportation to family groups that possessed fewer mobility options.⁴⁴

As the nation’s largest city, New York was a prime destination for PRR passengers. PRR officials paid little attention to advertising targeted at the business travelers who made up the preponderance of rail travelers going to and from New York. Instead, poster advertising targeted the discretionary tourist market, particularly the same young couples that executives sought to attract to Atlantic City.

⁴²http://www.allposters.co.uk/-sp/Pennsylvania-Railroad-Washington-D-C-Posters_i3408669_.htm,
http://www.allposters.co.uk/-sp/Pennsylvania-Railroad-Washington-Posters_i395434_.htm, accessed on April 15, 2012.

⁴³<http://www.flickr.com/photos/estampemoderne/6789217370/in/pool-778942@N20>; http://www.allposters.co.uk/-sp/Looking-Deco-Posters_i811306_.htm, accessed on April 15, 2012.

⁴⁴ See the examples in Beverley Cole and Richard Durack, *Railway Posters, 1923-1947* (London: Laurence King, 1992), esp. 149; Ralph Harrington, “Beyond the bathing belle: images of women in inter-war railway publicity,” *The Journal of Transport History* 25 (March 2004): 22-45; <http://www.flickr.com/photos/36844288@N00/4691076973/in/pool-778942@N20>, http://www.allposters.co.uk/-sp/Soleil-Toute-Lannee-Posters_i332447_.htm, accessed on April 15, 2012.

Advertising posters nonetheless represented an odd mélange of styles, ranging from a depiction of a young couple atop the Empire State Building, gazing out at Lower Manhattan – a pose remarkable similar to that depicted in one of the Atlantic City posters – to a close-up view of the Statue of Liberty to another of the Brooklyn Bridge and New York skyscrapers, to an odd view of the piers along the Hudson River. Even though there is a dramatic background of skyscrapers, the foreground illustrates warehouses and a barge ferrying PRR freight cars across the river – hardly images conducive of a romantic trip to Manhattan. Interestingly, the poster has been recycled, with a generic reference to New York (as the Empire State) replacing the specific reference to the Pennsylvania Railroad. Perhaps in keeping with the perception of Paris as an avant-garde center of culture, many European railways (such as the Southern Railway) offered a less literal and more stylized representation of the delights that awaited tourists traveling by rail.⁴⁵

New York was also the site of the 1939 World’s Fair, and PRR officials were anxious to attract as many tourists as possible. A new series of posters reflected these aspirations. Two examples were similar in style, yet they reflected subtle differences in attitude about the role that the railroads would play in the country’s future. Both posters emphasized that the PRR, the only carrier with tunnels under the Hudson and East rivers, was the most convenient link to the Fair site on Long Island – “Direct Route to New York World’s Fair” and “Straight to the Gate.” Both posters depicted that straight route, linking Penn Station in Manhattan to some of the most recognizable structures at the Fair, the Trylon, Perisphere and the Helicline. Yet, one poster shows Penn Station prominently in the foreground, with the Fair a distant goal. The other, in contrast, reduces the size and the importance of the thirty-year-old station while giving pride of place to the Fair buildings, suggesting that the modern had replaced the antiquated. Even the lettering used for the phrase “straight to the gate” suggested a modernity that was at odds with the more restrained “Pennsylvania Railroad” lettering at the bottom of the poster – as if the poster’s creators were suggesting that the railroad was out of touch with modernity.⁴⁶

Perhaps not surprisingly, PRR officials chose not to emphasize the gritty industrial city of Pittsburgh as a tourist destination. N. C. Wyeth did paint an image of the city, as part of his series of four, ca. 1930, but his view harkened back to the Pittsburgh’s distant past, and not its distinctly less appealing modern role as the smokiest community in the United States, if not the world. In depicting the founding of Fort Prince George in 1754, Wyeth emphasized “Pittsburgh in the Beginning,” and hoped that viewers would see the connection to “Modern Pittsburgh . . . Served by the Pennsylvania Railroad.” While Grif Teller and others did contribute some calendar art featuring Pittsburgh subjects, those scenes appealed to shippers, not passengers, and there seems to have been little additional publicity material relating to the city. Interestingly, the fourth of Wyeth’s historical images, “In Old Kentucky,” featured a state that was barely served by the PRR. Like his depiction of Pittsburgh, there was a clear reference to “Modern Kentucky . . . Served by the Pennsylvania Railroad.”⁴⁷

By 1941, the PRR had launched its “Fair Weather” advertising campaign, featuring ads that demonstrated either passenger trains rolling safely through stormy or wintery weather in an urban industrial environment, or else cruising along through glorious sunny weather in an idyllic rural

⁴⁵http://www.enjoyart.com/single_posters/america/TC-RP-22152-New--york--Pennsylvania-railroad-poster-print-.htm;
<http://www.amazon.com/Pennsylvania-Railroad-Travel-Poster-Print/dp/B0009NIDE8>;

⁴⁶<http://www.wolfsonian.org/explore/collections/direct-route-new-york-worlds-fair-pennsylvania-railroad>;
<http://decoarchitecture.tumblr.com/post/13820249208/pennsylvania-railroad-poster-historic-1939-image>; accessed on April 15, 2012.

⁴⁷<http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/whi/fullRecord.asp?id=68041>;
<http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/whi/fullRecord.asp?id=68039>; accessed on April 15, 2012.

setting. Such images may well have evoked the disenchantment that many Americans manifested toward industry, in the immediate aftermath of the Great Depression, and they may also have suggested that the United States was, at least thus far, immune from the political and military storms that were then buffeting Europe. The “Fair Whether” theme nonetheless continued well into the postwar period, with a 1947 ad emphasizing that “While the Storm rages . . . THE TRAIN GOES THROUGH,” and extolling the virtues of the PRR’s “WEATHERPROOF service.”⁴⁸

The Second World War injected a patriotic fervor that induced a distinct change in PRR art. Most unusual was the reliance on gigantism, to suggest the overwhelming power of the industry and the military of the United States. This theme was particularly apparent in two pieces of calendar art commissioned by the PRR, and both executed by artist Dean Cornwell. In *Serving the Nation*, executed for the 1943 calendar, a giant Uncle Sam looms over the PRR and the factories that it served. *Forward*, designed for the 1944 calendar, suggested a similar theme in an agrarian setting, with a PRR train and farm tractor overshadowed by American fighting forces. A 1944 advertising poster, drawn by Frank J. Reilly, distilled the might of the American military into a single massive soldier, eight tons of muscle and fighting ability. Such images were not notably different from those produced by other railroads, from a giant Union Pacific locomotive engineer to a tank rolling into battle above a freight train rushing similar tanks to ports of embarkation.⁴⁹

More conventional wartime advertisements depicted the PRR’s role in moving troops and war materiel, as well as educating the public as to the role that PRR employees played in the war effort. Some ads showed PRR passenger trains cheered along by workers outside a steel mill, or by military officers who observe that “There’s another reason we’ll win this war.” “On Their Way” followed a common theme in wartime advertising, showing pensive troops ready to leave for overseas battlefields, nervous but determined to do their duty. More unusual were PRR ads that informed passengers and the general public about the role that women were playing in the war effort, from collecting tickets on commuter trains to staffing information bureaus to acting as brakemen on freight trains. Most notable was the “Molly Pitcher, 1944” ad, a reference to a heroine of the American Revolution. A few years later, at war’s end, another ad reflected the position of PRR executives – and federal government officials – that women should yield their railway jobs to returning male veterans, who exchanged one type of uniform for another.⁵⁰

For a very brief period during the late 1940s, the PRR offered through sleeping car service to points west of Chicago, as far as Los Angeles and Mexico City, in conjunction with other railroads. These posters tended to differ considerably from others, in both style and subject matter, featuring both a softer and a more stylized format, to give an impressionistic sense of the drama and the assignment associated with the American West. To a substantial degree, they resembled the poster art employed on the Santa Fe and several other western carriers, although there is no direct evidence that the two carriers collaborated in their advertising efforts to that extent.⁵¹

⁴⁸Burness, *Classic Railroad Advertising*, 159-61, 167.

⁴⁹Lynn Johnson and Michael O’Leary, *All Aboard: Images from the Golden Age of Rail Travel* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1999), 116-27; Pennsylvania Railroad Calendar Paintings, <http://www.billspennsphotos.com/apps/photos/album?albumid=9209486>; <http://www.rrmuseumpa.org/visitors/seasonal/troopstrains/ads.htm>; accessed on April 12, 2012

⁵⁰Burness, *Classic Railroad Advertising*, 162-65; <http://www.flickr.com/photos/silverbluestar/4916140253/in/pool-778942@N20>, accessed on April 15, 2012.

⁵¹See, examples Johnson and O’Leary, *All Aboard*, in 105-12; and Burness, *Classic Railroad Advertising*, 56-72, 106-12, 189-98; http://www.allposters.co.uk/-sp/Pennsylvania-Railroad-1940s-Posters_i5121587_.htm; <http://www.art-books.com/cgi-bin/artbooks/50-0098.html>; <http://boxofshiny.tumblr.com/post/1371964982/well-hello-there-roy-pennsylvania-railroad>; accessed on April 15, 2012.

In common with other railroads, the PRR advertised prestigious “named” trains, hoping that their cachet would attract affluent travelers. On example, from the 1920s, was a short-lived combined air and rail service linking New York and Los Angeles. With aircraft flying by day and trains carrying sleeping passengers through the night, it was possible to reduce travel times, although at considerable expense, inconvenience, and even danger.⁵² Not surprisingly, several versions of poster art featured this premium service. All of the ads depicted both the PRR train and the affiliated Transcontinental Air Transport plane, although one emphasized the route and the other the destination. The former was more informative, providing viewers with details about the service, as well as a reassurance that the trains were “luxurious” and the planes “safe” and “swift” – something that was often not the case – while the latter focused on the appealing aspects of the California lifestyle.

In later years, long after the rail-air service had ended, the PRR advertised other premium trains, including the Chicago-to-Florida *South Wind*, and the grandest of them all, the *Broadway Limited*. The earliest, prewar, ads for the *Broadway* featured interior views of the trains amenities, with a tight focus on a pair of passengers, in a dining car, being served by a PRR employee. In the more democratic and egalitarian vision that followed the war, later ads depicted the new equipment assigned to the train, as well as to interior views that featured larger groups of passengers. Not surprisingly, all of the passengers were white and upper middle class in dress and deportment. Intriguingly, by the 1950s, both the emphasis on new equipment and the depictions of passengers had disappeared, replaced by a view of the principal destinations served by the *Broadway Limited*. The lack of emphasis on the new equipment was understandable, given that few American railroads possessed a financial incentive to buy new passenger cars after the early 1950s. The lack of passenger views is more puzzling, but may be related to uncertainty as to whether or not to include less affluent travelers, as well as people of color. Such individuals were more likely to appear on trains, particularly as affluent travelers increasingly chose to fly, but they were not in keeping with the traditional image of PRR passengers. A 1952 golden anniversary ad for the *Broadway Limited* showed only one person, a small boy who was nostalgically waving at the train, rather than riding on it. In keeping with the fiftieth anniversary, a golden glow suffused both the landscape and the train, one of the few instances in which a PRR color ad did not depict a train in familiar Tuscan red. A still later ad depicted “Breakfast in Hoosierland,” intending (as with the young boy waving at the train) to evoke nostalgia for the rural Midwest. The PRR’s advertisements for the *Broadway Limited* were in any event strikingly different from those used by the rival New York Central to advertise the competing *Twentieth Century Limited*. Even though both trains served the same endpoints (New York and Chicago), advertisements for the latter emphasized the “Magic Carpet” – that is, the red carpet, unrolled along the station platform, that symbolized elegance and luxury. Other NYC ads emphasized that “Your Arrival [on the *Twentieth Century Limited*] is an Event,” with stylish passengers being treated as royalty, while another ad profiled a passenger who “felt like a Princess” while on a NYC train. The two advertising styles were an accurate reflection of the image of the New York Central as an elite, high-speed, high-service carrier, and of the PRR as a workaday, workingman’s railroad that served the American heartland. Interestingly, however, even PRR advertisements for trains aimed at budget-minded working-class travelers (such as the all-coach *Trail Blazer* and *Jeffersonian*) featured portrayals of uniformly affluent passengers.⁵³

In both the prewar and the postwar period, the PRR’s advertising differed markedly from styles in use in Europe. British railway posters often utilized a softer and more stylized format—typical for

⁵²For additional information on this service, see William W. Atterbury, “Linking Rail and Air Transport,” *Pennsylvania Railroad Information*, December 1928 and Chuck Blardone, “The Airway Limited,” *The Keystone* 36 (Summer 2003): 11-75; <http://www.nasm.si.edu/collections/artifact.cfm?id=A19900863000>; accessed on April 15, 2012.

⁵³Johnson and O’Leary, *All Aboard*, 42; Burness, *Classic Railroad Advertising*, 120, 137-7, 174, 177.

them, but unusual for the PRR. Those posters, particularly the LNER “Epping Forest” example, were even more stylized than was the case with the PRR. Moreover, in at least one instance, the Great Western Railway used poster art to encourage tourists to remain close to home, rather than to travel far afield. Moreover, British railway advertising often focused solely on the destination, dispensing with any pictorial representation of the railways whatsoever – something that was rarely the case in American railway advertising.⁵⁴

It was in the realm of the “named trains” that PRR advertisements most closely resembled those employed on the European continent. Particularly in France, poster artists emphasized the train, often in stylized art deco renderings.⁵⁵ PRR ads were nonetheless more likely to include groupings of people on board, or preparing to board the train. This was particularly apparent with the advertising campaign that accompanied the introduction of the new “Fleet of Modernism” passenger services in 1938. In common with earlier posters, from the 1920s, the new advertisements continued to feature substantial blocks of text, but with the images in a more modernistic, almost art-deco style.⁵⁶

During the first third of the twentieth century, PRR officials exhibited a remarkable commitment to the promotion of their railroad, through displays at expositions, railfan excursions, calendar art, posters, and other forms of visual advertisement. To a certain degree, the PRR was an innovator in these areas, and often employed some of the leading artists, illustrators, and publicity agents in the United States. For the most part, however, PRR officials chose to emulate rather than innovate, often by copying the work of other railroads. Displays at fairs and exhibitions were often designed by civil and mechanical engineers, individuals who often lacked an understanding of the best methods for wooing the public. Posters and print ads were quite conventional and mimicked those in use on other American railroads. PRR executives chose not to borrow the more innovative artistic techniques that were on display in Britain and, to an even greater extent, on the Continent.

However, it is far from certain that more innovative advertising strategies would have succeeded in attracting a larger number of tourists and other travelers to the PRR’s trains. The railroad, like all of the others in the United States, experienced a steady decline in passenger revenues, beginning in the 1920s. Inasmuch as the PRR operated more passenger trains than any other railroad in the United States, the consequences for the railroad’s overall financial health were especially severe. Thus, it was the presence of underlying structural factors (geography, population density, the disaggregated and uncoordinated nature of private railway ownership, the absence of national transport planning, etc.) that induced secular declines in passenger services on the Pennsylvania Railroad and elsewhere in the United States. In that context, the nature of railroad advertising was a minor factor in influencing consumer demand for rail-based mobility.

Nonetheless, the PRR’s efforts at advertising and touristic promotion reveal interesting details about the development of the twentieth-century railway industry in the United States, in contrast to that in Britain and on the Continent. Rather than adopt a consistent promotional campaign to attract tourists (as was the case in much of Europe), PRR officials at first depended on their engineering expertise, as technically knowledgeable company insiders prepared exhibits at World’s Fairs and similar venues. This strategy was of limited success, as the exhibits appealed to a technocratic elite, rather

⁵⁴Johnson and O’Leary, *All Aboard*, 79; D.C.H. Watts, “Evaluating British railway poster advertising : The London & North Eastern Railway between the wars,” *The Journal of Transport History*25 (September 2004): 23-56; <http://www.flickr.com/photos/36844288@N00/4679049665/in/pool-778942@N20>, accessed on April 15, 2012.

⁵⁵Johnson and O’Leary, *All Aboard*, 79.

⁵⁶Burness, *Classic Railroad Advertising*, 155-7, 159; <http://www.tias.com/9105/PictPage/1922594801.html>; accessed on April 15, 2012.

than to the masses of people who constituted the potential market for rail services. By the late 1920s, PRR officials were beginning to exploit the potential of new printing techniques and distribution methods, creating advertisements that appealed to affluent travelers. Yet, those affluent travelers were not mobility dependent, and they possess transportation options other than the train – the private automobile being the most obvious example. During the Second World War, PRR advertising unsurprisingly shifted to patriotic themes. After the war, the PR advertisers redirected the ad campaigns toward families, while still maintaining the fiction that only upper-middle-class travelers rode the rails.⁵⁷ Not surprisingly, other travelers (the working class, members of minority groups, etc.) were unable to identify with these advertising portrayals. More seriously, as larger and larger numbers of people gained access to automobiles, they lost their susceptibility to railway advertising, and even paeans to nostalgia could not bring them back to the rails.

⁵⁷<http://www.flickr.com/photos/silverbluestar/5481967911/in/pool-778942@N20>,
<http://explorepahistory.com/displayimage.php?imgId=1-2-6C1>; accessed on April 15, 2012.