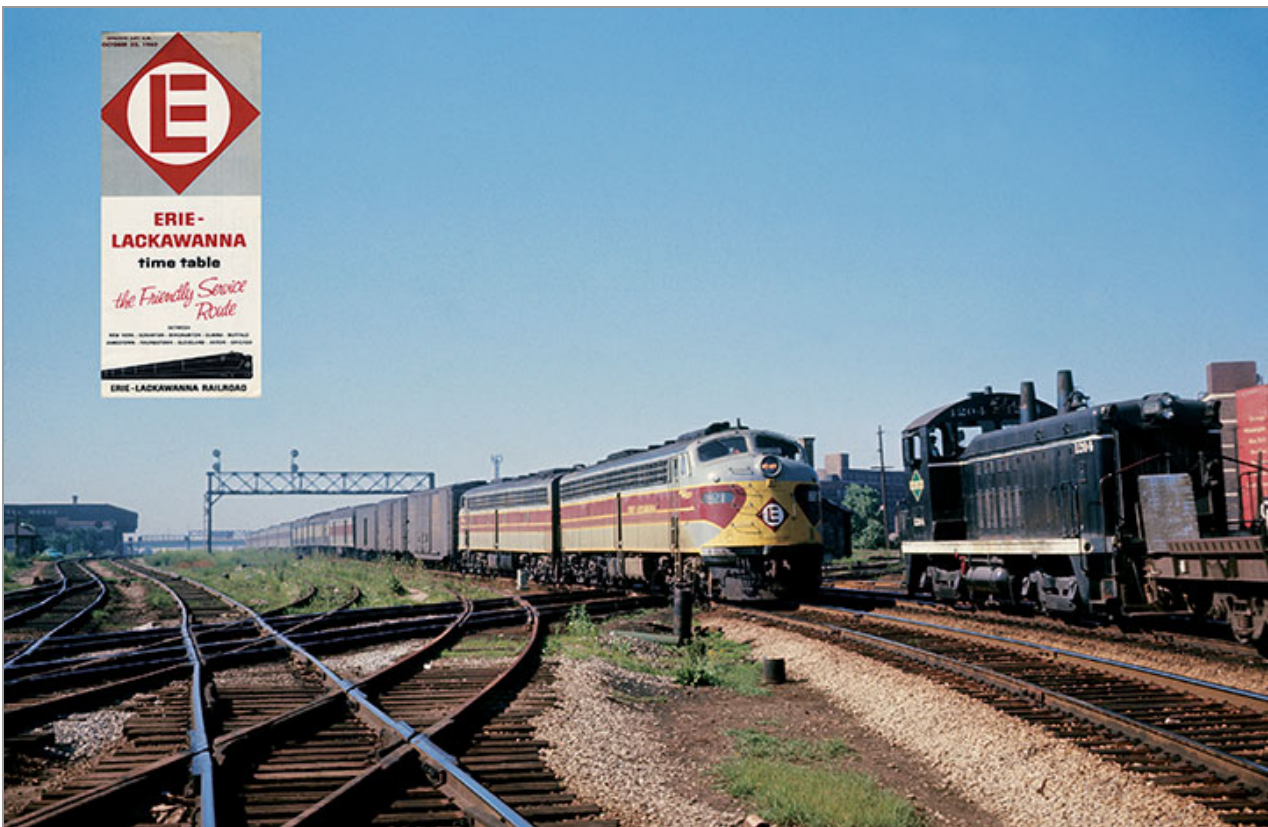


15 Years of Passenger Service on the Erie Lackawanna

Part 1 Long-Distance Service

by *El Simon*



The pride of the Erie Lackawanna fleet was the Hoboken (New York)–Chicago Phoebe Snow, shown making its early morning arrival in Chicago in 1966. The original Phoebe Snow was christened by the Delaware, Lackawanna & Western in 1949 as a Hoboken–Buffalo day streamliner, but the name and the train’s signature observation cars (though not the train itself) was dropped shortly after the Erie Lackawanna merger in 1960—some speculate because former Erie management initially held the upper hand in the newly formed EL. However, when former DL&W president William White became EL’s president in 1963, he resurrected the name ... by applying it to EL Hoboken–Chicago train Nos. 1 and 2, the Erie-Lackawanna Limited (before the merger, Erie Railroad’s Erie Limited). He

also placed the tavern-lounge observation cars back in service, though only east of Meadville, Pa. Mike Schafer

Erie Lackawanna Railway was the final name applied to the railroad that was formed by the 1960 merger of the Delaware, Lackawanna & Western Railroad and the Erie Railroad. Financially weak, heavily taxed, beset with declining markets and major competition, the resulting Erie Lackawanna managed to hang on long enough to be included in the 1976 formation of the Eastern colossus Conrail. That railroad would validate the essential weakness of the company by the extent its routes would be pruned by the new company.



At the time of EL's absorption into Conrail in 1976, EL was still running MU electrics dating from the 1920s. With the Empire State Building looming in

the distance across the Hudson River, a set of ancient MUs prepares to depart from Hoboken (N.J.) Terminal. Jim Boyd, collection of Kevin Eudaly

This article takes a look at the passenger operations of the EL from the perspective of almost 40 years on. The author frequently used and observed the railroad in the early 1970s and has consulted his records to refresh his memory.

The former Erie portion of the EL reached from Jersey City, N.J., to Chicago via Binghamton, N.Y.; Akron, Youngstown, and Marion, Ohio; and Huntington and Hammond, Ind. Trains reached Dearborn Station via the Chicago & Western Indiana, which also serviced the cars and locomotives. Cleveland was also served via a branch line that also provided through service to Pittsburgh in cooperation with the Pittsburgh & Lake Erie.



The Lackawanna's premier run was the Lackawanna Limited, which ran on a daytime schedule between Hoboken and Buffalo. At one time, DL&W Hoboken–Buffalo trains made better time than NYC's "Water Level Route" runs between New York and Buffalo—until the NYC gained control of the

DL&W in the late 1930s and put a stop to such humiliation. The eastbound Lackawanna Limited is shown being switched at Binghamton, N.Y., circa 1930. EL would use this station for all trains after 1960. It still stands. Cal's Classics

The DL&W reached no farther west (from Hoboken, N.J.) than Buffalo, N.Y., but did offer through New York–Chicago service via the Nickel Plate at the Buffalo Gateway to Erie, Pa.; Cleveland, Ohio; Fort Wayne, Ind.; and Chicago. Both railroads competed between the New York City area and the Southern Tier cities of Binghamton, Elmira, and Corning. In fact, coordination and rationalization of facilities had already begun between Binghamton and Elmira.

The Lackawanna linked New York and Binghamton via the Delaware Water Gap and Scranton, Pa., while the Erie operated to Binghamton via Suffern and Port Jervis, N.Y., and the Delaware River valley.



One of EL's two Phoebe observation cars at Hoboken Terminal. Both were Budd Company products. As of 2014, they still see occasional service as business cars on Metro North Railroad. W. E. Botkin

Both railroads operated an extensive commuter service that had been consolidated in 1957 in the former Lackawanna's Hoboken Terminal. Most commuters continued on to Manhattan via railroad ferries, subways, and buses.

From its inception, the EL was beset by a number of forces that did not make for a secure future. Consider a few:

1 An aging fleet of cars and locomotives and scarce funds to replace them.

1 An unwillingness to provide government support during the first half of the railroad's existence.

1 A need to maintain extensive marine and commuter facilities that were subject to a ruinous level of taxation.

1 Expenses that exceeded revenues and a declining freight base that could not make up the difference.

Still, many preferred the more easygoing service on the long-haul trains, especially in the modernized former Erie coaches. And, how about the view of the Poconos from the Phoebe Snow's tavern-lounge observation car?

After the EL hit its low point around 1966, the Cavalry appeared and began to implement an improvement program that continued long after memories of the EL have faded.

Think of the EL's passenger service as being made up of three components:

1. Long-distance trains beyond the commuter zone (known as "Thru-Line" trains on the Erie, a term that probably stuck even after the merger).
2. Electrified commuter service (all on former Lackawanna lines).
3. Diesel commuter service (mostly Erie but some Lackawanna).

So, how did things go for each segment? A little pre-merger history is in order.



During the first full year of operations for the EL, we see westbound train No. 1-31, the combined Erie-Lackawanna Limited/Phoebe Snow, slicing through an Orange—South Orange, N.J., in fact—and along the MU layover yard on June 4, 1961. Three ex-Erie E8s still in Erie livery but relettered for EL lead the impressively long train. An ex-Erie modernized diner-lounge from Erie Limited service will operate through to Chicago, as will the ex-DL&W 10-6 sleeper Pocono, built in 1949 for the joint DL&W-Nickel Plate Westerner and New Yorker trains operating between Hoboken and Chicago via Buffalo and Cleveland. At Hornell, a buffet-lounge will be added to No. 31's cars which will be separated from No. 1 for their trip to Buffalo. both photos, John Dziobko



Erie's flagship train—and its modest answer to New York Central's 20th Century Limited and Pennsylvania's Broadway Limited—was the Erie Limited. It ran from Jersey City to Chicago and featured a Buffalo section that split from the main-stem train at Hornell, N.Y. In both directions, the train, shown racing along the Delaware River in Upstate New York, covered the scenic east half of the trip in daytime hours and the flatlands western end overnight. Cal's Classics

The Erie operated three principal trains between New York and Chicago with the Erie Limited and Lake Cities (formerly the Midlander) being the most prominent, and the Atlantic/Pacific Express more attuned to mail and local travel. Erie provided diner-lounge cars at appropriate meal periods. Thirteen streamlined sleepers were sufficient to protect scheduled requirements at merger time, but service was soon undergoing a series of retrenchments. Generally, all service was limited to the former Erie main line between Hoboken and Chicago, although a parlor-diner was still operated on one Erie-P&LE pool round trip between Cleveland and Pittsburgh.

The Lackawanna operated four round trips out of Hoboken to and from Buffalo, with additional service between Hoboken and Scranton and the Southern Tier of New York. Several through sleepers and coaches were

operated beyond Buffalo to Cleveland and Chicago via the New York, Chicago & St. Louis (the Nickel Plate Road) west of Buffalo.

Flagship of the post-World War II DL&W was the streamlined Phoebe Snow —pride of the Lackawanna. All streamlined, with a full diner and tavern-lounge observation car, there was also a through sleeper for the NKP. The Lackawanna had a fleet of nine postwar sleepers that initially were assigned to Pullman lines from Hoboken to Chicago, Buffalo, Elmira, or Binghamton. By 1960, accommodation requirements were down and would continue to decline. The resourceful Pullman Company repainted two cars in Illinois Central livery (Kittatinny and Lackawanna) and two others (Pequest and Tunkhannock) did a tour of service in B&O blue.



Beset by declining passenger revenues and increased operating costs, EL instituted a service-rationalization plan early on, eliminating once-rival but now duplicative services. Another move ended tavern-lounge observation cars on the Erie-Lackawanna Limited. But one of the biggest changes came on Oct. 29, 1962, when EL as well as Nickel Plate pulled out of the old DL&W terminal in downtown Buffalo, moving all passenger trains some three miles out to a remote, hard-to-find facility at the former Erie SK Yard. Train 37 arrives at the new passenger facility on Babcock Street the day

after the roads transferred their operations. The “new” depot in this photo taken on Oct. 29, 1962, is a remodeled yard office. Cliff Redanz

Erie’s main passenger car shops were located in Susquehanna, Pa., at a point where the railroad made a slight detour through the Keystone State, and it was here that a number of coaches, diners, and parlor-diners were rebuilt in 1947 and 1952 with wide windows and a semi-streamlined appearance. Those diner-lounges (as they actually were) had been built for Pullman Company seasonal assignment around 1928 and sold to the Erie in 1930. Ironically, the Erie stored most of its diners during the worst of the Depression and relied on Pullman-operated restaurant sleeper and parlor cars. Before the war, Erie purchased several orders of milk cars and then acquired 22 baggage and 8 mail-baggage cars from ACF in 1950. Soon, five of these cars were rebuilt to incorporate a dining crew dorm in the former baggage area.

Lackawanna, having acquired a group of new cars, contented itself with acquiring a small group of former troop sleepers and several groups of boxcars for its head-end needs. Two 1927 mail-baggage cars, 1812 and 1813, were semi-streamlined in 1949 for Phoebe Snow service.



In the arms of dad Johnny Young, young Cherl Ann Young has just presented a bouquet to Sam Hunsinger, conductor of the eastbound Erie-Lackawanna Limited at Binghamton. The occasion on this Aug. 1, 1963, was the restoration of former the Phoebe Snow tavern-lounge observation cars to the Chicago section of the train as far as Meadville, Pa., after their removal late in 1962. Their removal resulted in unfavorable publicity and their revival was warmly received. Railroad representatives and newsmen rode the train, and scenes like this one were repeated at a number of stations along the line. Ultimately, EL restored the Phoebe Snow name, too — replacing the Erie-Lackawanna Limited name all the way to Chicago as well as to Buffalo. William S. Young, ELHS collection

The new company adopted the Lackawanna's maroon-and-gray livery for all of its front-rank, long-haul equipment, including its locomotives. Both Erie and Lackawanna began dieselization of passenger trains with a small fleet of

Electro-Motive A-B-A F3s and then graduated to pairs of EMD E8s. Erie also acquired twelve Alco PA-1 and two PA-2 units and these served until traded in on new power in 1969. They spent their final years in freight service and the same fate would befall the E8s in the 1970s. Lackawanna did operate its Train Masters through to Scranton when new, but generally the EL was not known for operating road switchers on long-distance trains. (By the way, the EL acquired a small fleet of EMD's dual-service—freight and passenger—SDP45 locomotives, but this was to achieve maximum range, and the units were not equipped with the necessary steam generators for passenger service).



Train 21 of Oct. 13, 1966, crosses the Delaware River as it leaves New York and enters Pennsylvania at Mill Rift. Tom Gascoigne



Hoboken-Binghamton train 21, just into Binghamton on the early afternoon of May 15, 1966, gets worked by the station switcher. The train will be wye'd for return as No. 22. Larry Deyoung



A fairly extensive regional EL train service survived along the Hoboken/New York-Binghamton corridor on two different routes into the

mid-1960s. At right in this photo from circa 1965 at the former DL&W station in Binghamton stands the Hoboken-bound Phoebe Snow, just in from Chicago. Some passengers off No. 2 are transferring to train 22 behind E8 No. 826. Train 22 is originating on one of the station's stub-end tracks and will operate to Hoboken via the slower "Erie Side" route through Port Jervis and Middletown while No. 2 goes on the "Lackawanna Side" via Scranton and Morristown. Walter Wells, ELHS collection

The new EL embarked on a plan to rationalize both its freight and passenger services where there was duplication, notably east of Buffalo and Binghamton. The railroad settled on one route for its principal east-west long-distance name trains, using the former DL&W Lackawanna main line east of Binghamton and the old Erie main west of Binghamton. For a time, connecting Hoboken–Binghamton trains operating on the "Erie side" via Port Jervis trains still made connections at Binghamton with the principal trains. Similarly, EL maintained connecting service to and from Buffalo at Hornell, N.Y.



The DL&W of the early 20th Century was an engineering marvel with new alignments and huge concrete structures to carry trains across valleys and

rivers. Opened in 1911, the 28-mile New Jersey Cut-Off (a.k.a. Lackawanna Cut-Off), bypassed the DL&W's circuitous original main line through northwest New Jersey. In this 1966 scene, the westbound Phoebe Snow glides onto Slateford Viaduct and over the Delaware River and the future route of I-80. Though inactive since 1979, consideration has been given to reviving the Cut-Off as a key to extending rail passenger service into Stroudsburg, Pa. Pete Scheckermann collection

The new EL shifted all passenger car work to the Lackawanna's Keyser Valley shops near Scranton.

A detailed summary of changes, mostly reductions, to EL's long-haul services can be found on the Internet and those wishing to examine a blow by blow account of this process are directed to examine this resource as well as back issues of *The Diamond*, the quarterly publication of the Erie Lackawanna Historical Society.



The New Jersey Cut-Off features one bore, Roseville Tunnel, a short distance west of Andover, to which NJ Transit is attempting to extend commuter-rail service as of press time. At the tunnel's east portal in December 1969, the eastbound Lake Cities kicks up the freshly fallen snow as it re-emerges into the morning sun. After Conrail's 1979 abandonment of the Cut-Off, the rails were pulled up and the Cut-Off property itself sold to an individual who was going to level it and sell the displaced earth for construction projects. The State stopped the plan. W. E. Botkin

It would take barely six years but by the late fall of 1966, the only surviving trains carrying passengers beyond the commuter zone were Nos. 5 and 6, the Lake Cities, between Hoboken and Chicago; No. 15, the Owl, between Hoboken and Buffalo; No. 10, the New York Mail between Buffalo and Hoboken; and Nos. 28/29 between Youngstown and Cleveland.

Number 5 left Hoboken in the evening and arrived Chicago the next afternoon; No. 6 left Chicago in the morning and arrived Hoboken the following morning. The Lake Cities provided daytime service between western Pennsylvania and the Windy City.

Number 15 left Hoboken just after midnight and arrived Buffalo mid-morning; counterpart 10 left Buffalo in late afternoon and arrived Hoboken before dawn. Number 15 was daily except Sunday; on Sunday, train 17 operated in nearly the same schedule slot but only went as far as Binghamton.



The sun is about to set on No. 1, the Erie-Lackawanna Limited, as it accelerates away from the Olean, N.Y., station on time at 6:32pm the pleasant evening of May 5, 1962. The Chicago-bound train has spent most

of the day traversing some of the most enjoyable—and unremarked—scenery in the Northeast, including the enchanting geography of New York’s Southern Tier. After Jamestown, N.Y., birthplace of actress Lucille Ball (who was actually born in East Jamestown, now known as Falconer), the rolling hills will give way to a fast run over the open lands of Ohio and Indiana. This view was photographed from Tower X, guarding the intersection of the EL and PRR’s Harrisburg–Buffalo main line. E8s 810 and 832 have 16 cars in tow. Cliff Redanz

Train 28 left Cleveland in late afternoon, arriving in Youngstown in time to connect with the eastbound Lake Cities. Train 29 left Youngstown early in the morning for Cleveland, reaching there before 8am. Originally this train pair served as the Cleveland section of the Lake Cities and remained so at the time of the merger. But by 1967 they served the Cleveland commuter market more than the long-distance market.

In less than a year, the Pullman had been cut back from Chicago to Marion, Ohio, and then to Youngstown where it could make a same-day turn from No. 5 to No. 6. In time, the diner-lounge was cut back as well, to Huntington, Ind., where likewise it could make a same-day turn off of No. 5 to No. 6.

It was a sad little train at Dearborn Station by this time—two E8s, two baggage cars, and two former Lackawanna coaches. After serving one final Christmas season, the train expired the first week of January 1970. It should be noted that EL did provide its own sleeper service after Pullman ceased to do so at the end of 1968.

The E8s served in commuter service until the arrival of new cars and locomotives, then worked freights until the formation of Conrail when they were retired. One unit remained to pull the vestigial commuter train into Cleveland and then passed into the business train fleet. Most streamlined coaches went to the Long Island and Delaware & Hudson; streamlined

sleepers and diners went to Strates Shows, while the Canadian National picked up other sleepers. The Long Island Rail Road got the two observations, and these still see service as Metro North business cars. (By the way, the two Budd diners are currently undergoing restoration by an historical society).

Considering that the Erie and Lackawanna between them only acquired 22 streamlined sleepers, there were a surprising number of distinctive features;

1 Erie had been assigned the only four prewar streamlined sleepers to advertise sections (along with bedrooms and roomettes) to be found in the east.

1 Erie's seven 1949 10-6 sleepers featured bedrooms with all crosswise beds, similar to some Pennsy cars and pre-dating the center-bedroom cars that started to come in 1950.

1 Erie's two 10-5 sleepers that came in 1954 were of the newer design and were an add-on to a Canadian National order.

1 Lackawanna obtained nine cars from ACF in 1949 that were similar to four smooth-sided 10-6s purchased by the Pennsylvania Railroad.



Here's No. 5 at Youngstown at mid-morning on Jan. 4, 1970—running late thanks to a snowstorm in the Southern Tier of New York—following its overnight trek from the Hudson River. While express is being loaded and unloaded, a switcher will pluck the sleeper off the end of the train to turn back on the last run of No. 6 late that same evening.



No. 5 has now reached Marion, Ohio, but it's running late enough that the diner-lounge will have to be pulled off here to turn back on No. 6 out of Chicago. The diner-lounge is otherwise scheduled to turn back at Huntington, Ind., assuming both trains are on time. But holding No. 6 there to wait for No. 5 will only make both trains considerably late.

Reaching The Big City

By the time of the formation of the Erie Lackawanna, all service was being operated from the Lackawanna Terminal in Hoboken. This edifice dated from

1907 and replaced an earlier terminal that had been destroyed by a fire that originated on a Lackawanna ferry. The terminal was, and remains, a beautiful historic structure on which NJ Transit has lavished big bucks in the renaissance that has embraced both NJ Transit and the city of Hoboken itself. A Bush train shed spans most of the tracks, and a concourse directs incoming commuters to ferries (they're back), buses, and PATH (Port Authority Trans Hudson subway trains. The ferry slips that once served the likes of the Elmira, Binghamton, and Pocono are still in place but the current ferry service is located south of the terminal. In another case of déjà vu, there is once again light-rail service whereas until 1949 Public Service trolleys served the terminal just north of the station.



Against a fiery sky lit by the nearby Standard Oil Refinery, the westbound Pacific Express is in the middle of its nearly midnight extended mail & express station stop at Lima, Ohio, in September 1967. By this time, train 7 and counterpart 8 were no longer shown in public timetables, though they still originated/terminated at Hoboken Terminal and Dearborn Station.

Nor would either train handle passengers even though both still carried a Stillwell rider coach (as the photographer found out the hard way, forcing him and a traveling buddy to take the PRR's General back to Chicago).

Mike Schafer



The Lake Cities' dapper engineer aboard the next-to-last run of No. 5. all photos, Jim Heuer



The Marion switcher is about to couple up to diner-lounge 746, a rolling battleship from the original Erie Limited. It was built in 1925 as a full diner; as Erie No. 946 it was converted to a diner-parlor car in 1935, then to a diner-lounge in 1940, and in 1947 modernized with double-size windows and streamlined-style roof.



The dated but still-elegant interior of diner-lounge 746 on the Lake Cities.

A majority of passengers headed for Manhattan board the PATH subway trains at a three-track terminal north of the station. From here, trains serve one line to downtown Jersey City and lower Manhattan or another line to midtown near Herald Square. Both routes were opened back in 1909–10 and many still call this line by its old name of “Hudson Tubes.”

Although the Baltimore & Ohio and the New York, Susquehanna & Western sponsored the most well-known train connection buses, the Erie also provided

connecting buses for its long-distance passengers and this service lasted into the EL era. Inaugurated in 1940 and provided by Public Service, the bus service was limited in later years to the two principle long-distance trains and operated between Rockefeller Center and Hoboken Terminal, presumably via the Lincoln Tunnel. Several additional stops were provided in Manhattan in both directions.

EPILOGUE: EL's long-distance passenger service ended on Jan. 5, 1970, when the last Lake Cities trains arrived at their respective terminals. Although its heritage was as the Cleveland leg of the Lake Cities, the Youngstown–Cleveland train continued into the Conrail era. By 1970, it had been deemed a commuter operation.

EL long-distance service survived not quite long enough to fall under the moratorium on passenger-train discontinuances that came with the signing of Amtrak legislation later in 1970. Not that it would have mattered. It is very unlikely that any EL long-distance services would have been picked up by Amtrak, which initially didn't even have the funding to pick up the former New York Central Chicago–New York route.—M.S.



Fans document the final No. 6 leaving Hammond on Jan. 4, 1970. Mike Schafer



The westbound Lake Cities is at Griffith, Ind., in 1969 as a Chesapeake & Ohio of Indiana freight waits to follow EL No. 5 into Chicago. Mike Schafer



The eastbound Lake Cities slips out of Dearborn Station in August 1967.
Don Ball, ELHS collection



The sun is setting behind the buildings of downtown Cleveland as train 28 rolls forth from the bowels of Terminal Tower (background), for years the

defining skyscraper of the city's impressive skyline. The train will make a dozen stops including its last, Youngstown, Ohio, where connections may be made with the eastbound Lake Cities out of Chicago. Four ex-Erie modernized coaches trail E8 No. 832 on this fall evening. Number 28 and counterpart 29 will reap the benefits of the 1970 Lake Cities discontinuance in that they will be upgraded with EL's former DL&W lightweight Phoebe Snow reclining-seat coaches. Jim Boyd, collection of Kevin Eudaly

The Erie Lackawanna passenger story will continue in the next issue of PTJ with coverage of EL commuter operations and how they laid the groundwork for today's extensive New Jersey Transit and Metro North Railroad operations in former Erie and Lackawanna territory.

EL's Anchor Terminals



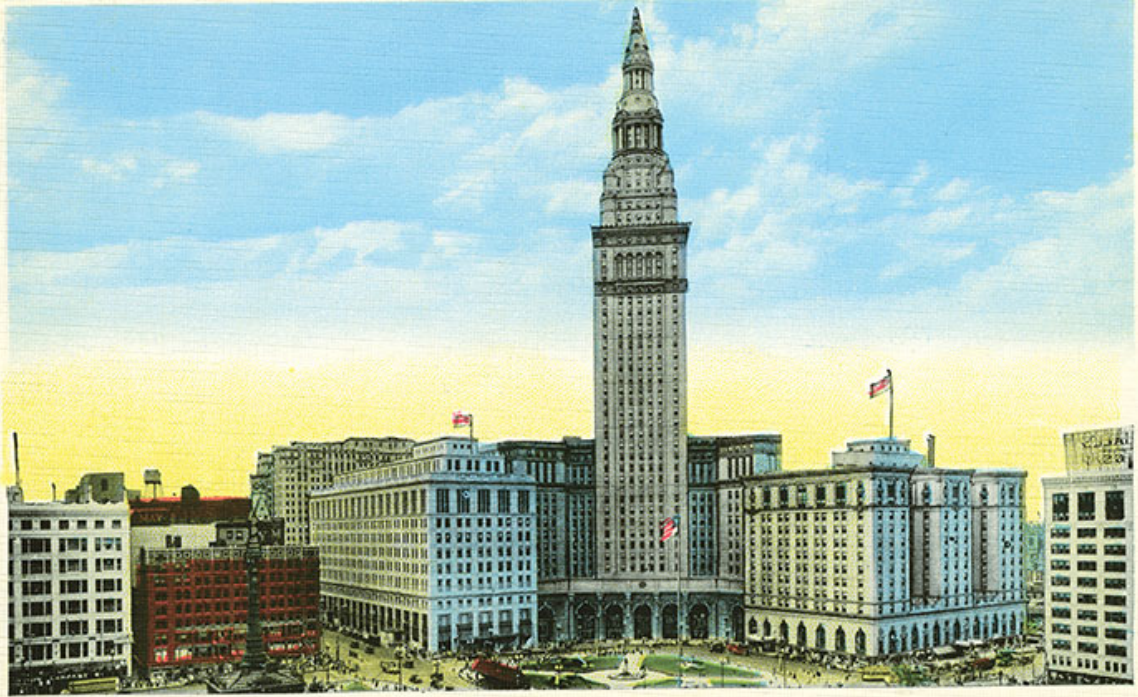
EL's easternmost rail passenger terminal was the former DL&W Hoboken Terminal, hard along the Hudson. From here, passengers could transfer to railroad-owned ferries to reach EL's ferry terminal in

Manhattan or use buses or PATH transit trains to get into New York.
Mike Schafer.



EL's principal terminal cities featured depots that were pretty impressive, except perhaps for Chicago and, after 1962, Buffalo. In the Windy City, EL called cramped Dearborn Station home for ten years. Alco PA No. 861 and mate stand ready to depart Dearborn in the fall of 1965 with train No. 8, the Atlantic Express. Dearborn was owned and operated by the Chicago & Western Indiana of which EL was part owner. Jim Boyd, collection of Kevin Eudaly

THE UNION TERMINAL TOWER, CLEVELAND, OHIO



EL passenger trains called at Cleveland's spectacular Terminal Tower until the 1976 Conrail merger. ELHS archives



The new Erie Lackawanna system is shown in this map released upon the 1960 merger. The double lines are not an indication of double track but designate routes served by passenger trains. By far, the EL mostly comprised former Erie lines; in fact, all routes west of Corning

and Buffalo were ex-Erie. EL operations south of Dayton to Cincinnati and over to Indianapolis involved trackage-rights/haulage agreements with the Baltimore & Ohio, and between Hammond, Ind., and Chicago. EL operated over trackage rights on the Chicago & Western Indiana, although EL did have some of its own properties in Chicago proper. This map implies that there was one line between Binghamton and Corning when in fact it was largely still two separate—but closely parallel—double-track main lines. Negotiations between DL&W and Erie to rationalize trackage and operations between those two cities were already under way at the time of the merger, and upon the merger all passenger trains were moved to the former Erie main line west of Binghamton. Eventually, all Buffalo passenger trains were transferred to former Erie trackage as well west of Corning via Silver Springs, N.Y. elhs archives

D. L. & W. Terminal, Buffalo, N. Y.



GATE

9

GATE

9



The

LAKE
CITIES

DEPARTS

11:00AM

ERIE - LACKAWANNA
TRAIN NO. 6

HUNTINGTON
LIMA
MARION
AKRON
WARREN
YOUNGSTOWN
MEADVILLE
JAMESTOWN
CLEAN
HORNELL
CORNING
CLMIRA
BINGHAMTON
SCRANTON
CRESCO
WYOMING



EL trains to and from Buffalo initially used the former DL&W lakefront terminal facility that today is used by the city's light-rail system. Unfortunately, in a cost-saving move, EL moved its Buffalo passenger station to a freight yard in 1962. John C. Dahl collection



EL had its own passenger terminal in Manhattan at Barclay Street, where ferries from Hoboken docked. Ferry times were part of the train schedules. Bob Webber, ELHS collection