

# New Haven's Owl: Drift off to sleep in Boston, wake up in New York

*by Thornton Waite*

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In the small hours of June 6, 1968, New Haven's eastbound Owl out of New York's Grand Central Terminal pauses at Bridgeport, Conn., with FL9 2041 and a mate in the lead. The night is not as quiet as it might appear,

co-travelers would shortly learn when checking into their motel at  
Mamaroneck, N.Y. mike schaffer; lighting assistance, Jim Boyd

*The Owl* was once one of the New York, New Haven & Hartford's premier name trains on the Shore Line, running overnight in both directions between New York City's Grand Central Terminal and Boston. Over its lifetime, the train's schedule called for approximately 6 1/2 hours for the 229-mile trip with limited or no stops en route, depending on the year, while traveling at an average leisurely rate of 35 m.p.h. For many years, *The Owl* was an all-Pullman train providing a convenient means of traveling overnight between the two cities, with a late evening departure and an early morning arrival in each city. In later years the train carried both Pullmans and coaches as well as head-end cars—baggage, express, and Railway Post Office cars. *The Narragansett* was a companion train to *The Owl*, providing coach and sleeping-car service between New York City, Providence, and Boston. Another night train that also covered *The Owl*'s route but continued all the way to Washington, D.C., was *The Federal*, connecting Washington, D.C. and Boston.

T I M E T A B L E

Effective September 26, 1948

EASTERN STANDARD TIME

*The New York*  
*New Haven*  
*and Hartford*  
RAILROAD CO.



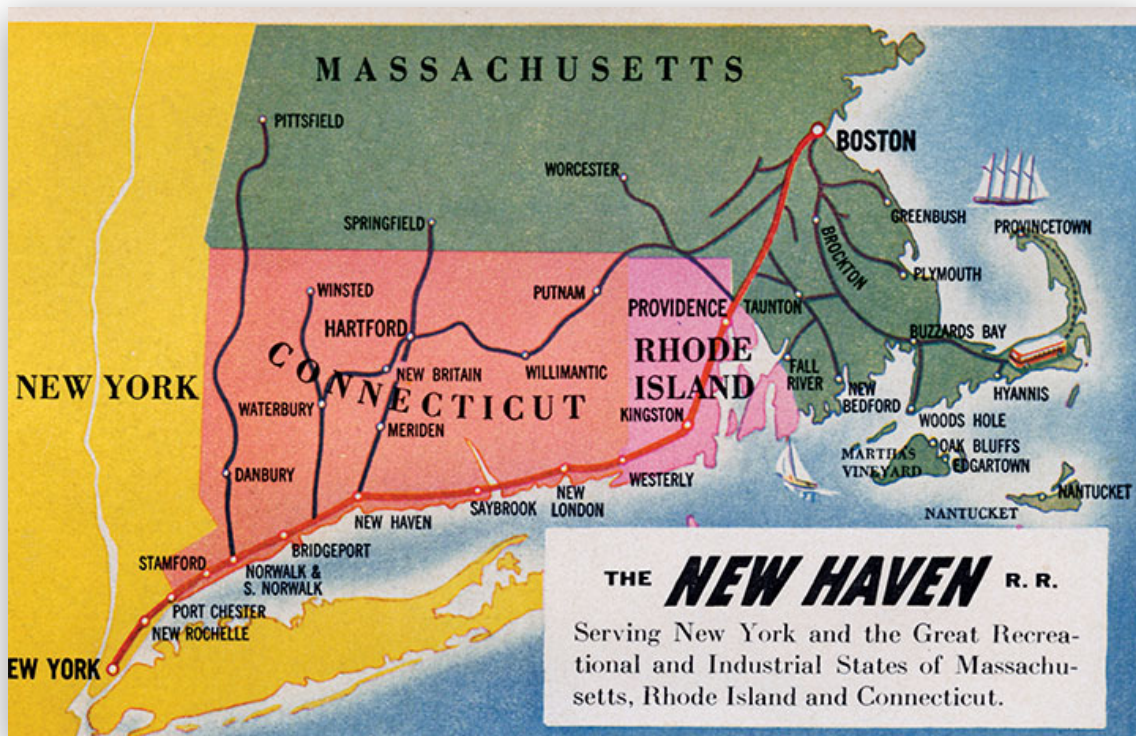
*The Owl* was an important and prestigious train on the New Haven Railroad. Indicative of its status, it had the lowest train numbers in the timetable. The westbound train carried the numbers 1 or 3 and the eastbound 2 or 4, depending on the year and day of the week. At the beginning of the 20th Century, the train had some of the most luxurious and innovative cars of its era. Over the years, accommodations on *The Owl* included sections (called “berths” by the New Haven), single and double bedrooms, compartments, drawing rooms, and roomettes.

The New Haven’s Shore Line was a busy route for many years, with the number of trains varying according to the year and economy. By 1920, the New Haven had 16 round-trip Shore Line trains, including mail trains that carried passengers. The number increased to 22 in 1930, but dropped to 15 by late 1933 due to the Depression. The number of Shore Line trains increased to 18 in 1940, and during World War II many of them operated in multiple

1960 the number had declined to 14 due to the 1958 recession and the

additional loss in traffic owing to the completion of the Connecticut Turnpike and competing air shuttles. The passenger counts say it all. In 1952 there were 1,703,380 passengers on the Shore Line, dropping to 1,591,593 in 1956. This number plummeted to 877,164 in 1960 and only 323,144 in 1968. This decline in passenger traffic over the years affected the operations of *The Owl*.

On its last legs (or wings) by the 1960s, *The Owl* was discontinued in February 1969, less than two months after the New Haven was absorbed into Penn Central. *The Federal* continued to offer Boston–Washington sleeping-car service until it too was discontinued with the advent of Amtrak on May 1, 1971. The train was revived by Amtrak as the Night Owl and eventually evolved into a Northeast Regional train between Boston and Newport News, Va., known as the Twilight Shoreliner.



The New Haven system postcard map Mike Schafer collection

## **When *The Owl* was a hatchling**

Until the New York, New Haven & Hartford gained control of the railroads in Connecticut, the most convenient all-rail routes between New York and Boston were either via Springfield via a connection with the Boston & Albany for the Springfield–Boston leg or over the Air Line via Willimantic, Conn. The New Haven completed the bridge over the Thames River at New London in 1889 and the Shore Line was upgraded over the next few years to the extent that it became the preferred route between Boston and New York.

By 1891 the New Haven was running Wagner Palace Cars with sections on a night train between New York and Boston. The train left New York at 12:01am, departed New London at 3:50am, Providence at 5:45am, and arrived at Boston at 7am, traveling a distance of 232 miles. The train dropped off a sleeping car at Providence. The westbound train left Boston at 12:01am and stopped at Providence at 1:20am, New London at 3:17am, and arrived in New York at 7am. This train picked up a sleeping car at Providence. By 1893 the train was being called the Midnight Express and carried sleepers, coaches, and baggage and mail cars. In 1901, the railroad advertised an all-Pullman First Midnight Express between Boston and New York with “Vestibuled Stateroom and Sleeping Cars,” while the Second Midnight Express advertised “Sleeping car and Coaches” between New York and Boston and a “Sleeping Car” between New York and Providence.

The train received the railroad’s best and newest equipment. For a few years in the beginning of the 20th Century, the railroad offered brass beds in specially built sleeping cars. These cars were built for the New Haven in 1910 and had seven “apartments.” They were said to be the most luxurious accommodations outside of private cars. Compartments were becoming popular at the time and

dresser, table, and two chairs. It was much like a smaller version of a private hotel room. Each room had its own separate dressing room and toilet, and rooms were outfitted with exotic woods such as Cuban mahogany, koko, English oak, and vermilion. The temperature could be controlled with a thermostat, and there was a new ventilation system with electric fans.

Numbered 2056 and 2057, the two cars were placed in service in November 1910. The one-way fare was \$12 between Boston and New York City, with an additional \$4.75 for a second person. They were so popular that the cars were often sold out.

The trains also carried a “Buffet Stateroom Baggage Car” in this period, with a large baggage compartment at the head end located next to the locomotive tender. The rest of the car had staterooms and a small kitchen for “midnight snacks” and a light breakfast. Cars 2262 and 2263 had a capacity of 20 passengers, and cars 2264 and 2265 could carry ten passengers. The latter two cars had four drawing rooms, while the previous two probably had eight. *The Owl* carried more conventional sleeping cars as well. The special cars disappeared when Pullman took over the sleeping-car operations in 1913. At this time the companion Midnight Express train carried regular sleeping cars, with sleeping cars and coaches to Providence year-round and to *Narragansett Pier* in the summer months in conjunction with the Narragansett Pier Railroad.

In May of 1911, *The Owl* departed both Boston and Grand Central at midnight and arrived at their final destinations approximately 6 1/2 hours later, about an hour longer than *The Owl* took in the late 1960s. At this time, in the 1910s, most daytime passenger trains took roughly six hours compared to regular Shore Line trains which took around 4 1/2 hours in the late 1960s; today’s Acela Express trains take 3 3/4 hours. Ironically, a photograph from 1957 of



The train ran in extra sections during holidays and for special events such as the annual Yale-Harvard football game.



*Sleep Your Way  
All The Way*

**CHOOSE FROM THESE CONVENIENT  
PULLMAN  
OVERNIGHT SLEEPING CAR SERVICES**

Eastern Standard Time LEAVE	DUE	TRAIN NAME	Frequency— Nights of:	For Detailed Schedules See Table No.	Equipment Details See Table C Train No.
Boston, Mass. .... 2:00 AM	New York (G.C.T.) .... 7:30 AM	<b>OWL</b>	Daily	1	3
Boston, Mass. .... 10:20 PM	Philadelphia, Pa. .... 5:15 AM	<b>FEDERAL</b>	*Except Saturdays	1	173
Boston, Mass. .... 10:20 PM	Washington, D. C. .... 7:45 AM	<b>FEDERAL</b>	Except Saturdays	1	173
Boston, Mass. .... 11:50 PM	Washington, D. C. .... 11:45 AM	<b>NEW YORKER</b>	Saturday nights only	1	187
Montreal, Que. .... 8:35 PM	New York (Penna. Sta.) ... 8:00 AM	<b>WASHINGTONIAN</b>	Daily	24	169
Montreal, Que. .... 8:35 PM	Washington, D. C. .... 1:15 PM	<b>WASHINGTONIAN</b>	Daily	24	169
New York (G.C.T.) .... 12:45 AM	Boston, Mass. .... 6:35 AM	<b>OWL</b>	Daily	1	2 (4)
New York (Penna. Sta.) ... 8:35 AM	Montreal, Que. .... 8:55 AM	<b>MONTREALER</b>	Daily	24	168
New York (G.C.T.) .... 12:45 AM	Providence, R. I. .... 5:25 AM	<b>OWL</b>	*Except Fri. and Sat.	1	2
Philadelphia, Pa. .... 1:03 AM	Boston, Mass. .... 8:25 AM	<b>FEDERAL</b>	*Except Saturdays	1	172
Providence, R. I. .... 3:25 AM	New York (G.C.T.) .... 7:30 AM	<b>OWL</b>	*Except Fri. and Sat.	1	3
Providence, R. I. .... 10:30 PM	Washington, D. C. .... 7:45 AM	<b>PILGRIM-FEDERAL</b>	*Except Saturdays	1	199-179 (173)
Springfield, Mass. .... 10:10 PM	Washington, D. C. .... 7:45 AM	<b>NO. 91 (S1) FEDERAL</b>	*Except Saturdays	3A	97 (51) 173
Washington, D. C. .... 10:20 PM	Boston, Mass. .... 8:25 AM	<b>FEDERAL</b>	Daily	1	172
Washington, D. C. .... 10:20 PM	Montreal, Que. .... 8:55 AM	<b>FEDERAL</b>	Daily	24	168
Washington, D. C. .... 10:20 PM	Springfield, Mass. .... 8:30 AM	<b>MONTREALER</b>	*Except Saturdays	3A	172

\* For additional annulments over holiday periods—See Table C.  
 a Later on Saturday nights.  
 v Earlier on Sunday mornings.  
 w Earlier on Saturday nights and certain Holiday nights.  
 y Earlier on Sunday nights.  
 z Later on Sunday and Holiday nights



This plug for overnight train service between Boston, New York, and Washington appeared in a New Haven public timetable issued on Oct. 29, 1961. New Haven's Owl, listed first, was not the only overnight New Haven train that left its point of origin late in the evening and reached its final destination by mid-morning. The famous Federal—perhaps best known for crashing into the concourse of Washington Union Station in 1953 following a brake failure—also fit PTJ parameters for what constitutes a “night owl” type of train. timetable mike schaffer collection

The railroad was constantly revising its schedules and accommodations for *The Owl*, depending on the state of the economy and demand for train service.

at Providence, New London, and New Haven, and carried New York–Boston and New York–Providence sleeping cars. A 1916 timetable does not list train names, and shows unnamed night trains 3 and 4 for New York–Boston passengers only. It was an all-Pullman train, with no coaches and no intermediate stops for passengers between the two endpoint cities. The trains offered staterooms as well as standard sleeping-car accommodation. Train No. 3 left Boston at 12:30am and arrived New York at 6:57am, while No. 4 left New York at 12:30am and arrived in Boston at 7:05am. The railroad also ran unnamed trains 1 and 2, both of which had sleeping cars and coaches between New York and Boston and between New York and Providence, but the trains did not handle baggage. These trains departed from New York and Boston ahead of trains 3 and 4 and had more stops, so that they arrived at about the same time as trains 3 and 4. Trains 3 and 4 became *The Owl*, while trains 1 and 2 were predecessors to *The Narragansett*.

In February 1926, trains 1 and 2 were called *The Owl* in the public timetable. The trains ran daily, as did Boston–New York train 3, the Night Express, which ran five minutes behind *The Owl*. The railroad also ran train 32, the New York–Boston Night Express, as well as the New York–Providence train 4, *The Narragansett*. *The Owl*, trains 1 and 2, and New York–Boston Night Express, train 3, carried no coaches. Train 32, the Boston–New York Night Express carried both coaches and sleeping cars. *The Narragansett*, train 4, carried sleeping cars only between New York and Providence and handled baggage. A note in the timetable stated the trains carried passengers only to the capacity of the sleeping cars.

The timetable noted that sleeping cars were open for occupancy at 10pm and could be occupied until 7:25am. This arrangement was typical throughout the

their car after the arrival of the train. Since the trains had no dining facilities, the travelers would get their breakfast at the station or at a nearby restaurant.

On May 23, 1926, *The Owl* had 11 assigned cars when it left Boston as train No. 1, consisting of all sleeping cars on the run but no baggage car. Although New Haven was not a scheduled stop, there was a change in motive power there, following electrification of the line between New York and New Haven in 1907. The consist of this train was:

NH 1370 (4-6-2 steam locomotive)

Nantes (16 sections)

Wannaska (16 sections)

Battle Creek (10 compartments)

Niagara Falls (10 compartments)

Tualatin (12 sections–1 drawing room)

Barnard (12–1)

Jacelia (12–1)

Cordaville (12–1)

Balzac (12–1)

Vanomi (12–1)

Plumadore (12–1)

the schedule included a Boston–Penn Station mail train. In the spring of 1929 and through the fall of 1930 there was a Grand Central–Boston night train called the Night Hawk, with New York–Boston sleepers. In this time period, *The Narragansett* did not operate east of Providence.



The Nightfall was built by Pullman for the New Haven Railroad in the spring of 1927 and was in the series used on *The Owl*. It had a unique 14-single-bedroom configuration with stationary beds. This car, numbered 751 by the New Haven, was photographed at South Boston on May 29, 1947, and was condemned in August 1958. The Night series had cars named using one word, such as Nightfall, and two words, such as Night Cove. collection of J. W. Swanberg

In 1928 the New Haven received new sleeping cars in the Night series for *The Owl*, and they were placed in service in June of that year. These cars were new “Single Room Sleeping Cars” with 14 individual rooms. The beds were slightly longer and narrower than a lower berth, with mattresses on box

for a room was the same as two lower berths and single occupancy of a room was one and a quarter railroad fares. The Night Cove and Night Haven were placed in service on Dec. 23, 1929. Single-bedroom cars on the train in the 1930s included Night Sky, Night Haven, and Night Cove. Other sleeping cars seen in the trains in this time period include Walworth (a 12-1, built in 1911), Marydel (16 sections, built in 1913), Gleason (16 sections, built in 1920), Hoblyn (12-1, 1921), Lochinvar (12-1, 1915), and Bonbright (12-1, 1913).

Table 1: Schedule and Accommodations for *The Owl*, February 1926

<b>Train 32 Night Express</b>	<b>Train 2 The Owl</b>	<b>Train 4 The Narragansett</b>	<b>Station</b>	<b>Train 1 The Owl</b>	<b>Train 3 Night Express</b>
11:30 PM	12:30 AM	1:20 AM	Lv. New York Ar. G.C.T.	6:20 AM	6:30 AM
4:17 AM	----	5:55 AM	Ar. Providence Lv.	----	1:17 AM
5:35 AM	6:50 AM	---	Ar. Boston Lv.	12:00 night	12:05 AM
Sleeping cars: New York- Boston Coaches: New York- Boston	Sleeping cars: New York- Boston (Compartment s), New York- Boston. No coaches	Sleeping cars: New York to Providence		No coaches Sleeping cars: Boston-New York (Compartment s) Boston-New York	No coaches Sleeping cars: Boston-New York
	No intermediate stops	No intermediate stops		No intermediate stops	Intermediate stops also at New London. Stops to leave passengers at New Haven and Bridgeport

Table 2: Consists of *The Owl*, April 1937

<b>Train No. 2, <i>The Owl</i>, New York-Boston, Daily</b>			
1 Paper	New York-Providence	Saturday	
1 Baggage	New York-Boston	Daily	
1 Combine	New York-Boston	Saturday	
1 Coach	New York-Boston	Saturday	
1 Sleeper	New York-Boston	Daily	12/1
1 Sleeper	New York-Boston	Daily	10/1/2
1 Sleeper	New York-Boston	Daily	14SBR
1 Sleeper	New York-Boston	Daily	12/1
1 Sleeper	New York-Boston	Daily	14S
1 Sleeper	New York-Boston	Except Saturday	12/1
1 Sleeper	New York-Boston	Except Saturday	14S
1 Sleeper	New York-Boston	Except Saturday	14SR

1 Sleeper	New York-Boston	Except Saturday	14S
1 Sleeper	New York-Boston	Except Saturday	14S
1 Sleeper	Providence-New York	Saturday	12/1

**Train No. 3, *The Owl*, Boston-New York, Daily**

1 Smoker	Boston-New York	Saturday	
1 Coach	Boston-New York	Saturday	
1 Sleeper	Boston-New York	Except Saturday	14S
1 Sleeper	Boston-New York	Except Saturday	14S
1 Sleeper	Boston-New York	Except Saturday	14SR
1 Sleeper	Boston-New York	Except Saturday	14S
1 Sleeper	Boston-New York	Daily	14S
1 Sleeper	Boston-New York	Daily	10/1/2
1 Sleeper	Boston-New York	Daily	14SR
1 Sleeper	Boston-New York	Daily	10/2/2
1 Sleeper	Boston-New York	Daily	12/1
1 Sleeper	Providence-New York	Saturday	12/1

1 Storage	New York-Boston	Ex. Saturday	
1 Paper	New York-Boston	Wednesday	
1 Baggage	New York-Boston	Ex. Saturday	
1 Combine	New York-Boston	Ex. Saturday	
1 Coach	New York-Boston	Ex. Saturday	
1 Sleeper	New York-Boston	Ex. Saturday	12/1
1 Sleeper	New Haven-Boston	Ex. Saturday	12/1
1 Sleeper	New York-Providence	Ex. Saturday	12/1
1 Sleeper	New York-Providence	Ex. Saturday	8S/5DSR

**Train No. 5: *The Narragansett* (Except Saturday)**

1 Express	Boston-Washington	Ex. Sat. & Sun.	To 199 at NH
1 Storage	Boston-Penn Station	Ex. Sat. & Sun.	To 199 at NH
1 Storage	Boston-Penn Station	Ex. Sat.	To 199 at NH
1 Express	Boston-New Haven	Ex. Sat. & Sun.	
1 Baggage	Boston-New York	Ex. Sat.	
1 Smoker	Boston-New York	Ex. Sat.	
1 Coach	Boston-New York	Ex. Sat.	
1 Sleeper	Boston-New York	Ex. Sat.	12/1
1 Sleeper	Boston-New York	Ex. Sat.	12/1
1 Sleeper	Providence-New York	Ex. Sat.	12/1
1 Sleeper	Providence-New York	Ex. Sat.	8S/5SR
1 Sleeper	Boston-New Haven	Ex. Sat.	12/1
1 Sleeper	New London-New York	Mondays in summer months only	10/2

Table 3: Consists of *The Narragansett*, April 1937

<b>Train No. 4: <i>The Narragansett</i> (Except Saturday)</b>			
1 RPO	New York-Springfield	Ex. Saturday	To 60 at NH
1 Storage	New York-New London	Ex. Sunday	
1 Express	New Haven-Providence	Monday	
1 Express	New Haven-Boston	Monday	
1 RPO	New York-Boston	Ex. Saturday	



Table 4: Consist of *The Owl*, April 29, 1951

<b>Train 2 – <i>The Owl</i>, New York-Boston, Daily</b>								
Car	Route	Mo n	Tue s	We d	Thu r	Fri	Sat	Su n
Baggage - Papers	GCT-Boston						1	
Baggage - Papers	GCT-Boston	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Baggage - Papers	GCT-Providence						1	
Sleeper – 12/1	GCT-Providence						1	
Sleeper- 14/4	GCT-Boston	1	1	1	1	1	-	1
Sleeper – 10/1/2	GCT-Boston	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Sleeper – 14/4	GCT-Boston	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Sleeper – 14/4	GCT-Boston	1	1	1	1	1	-	1*
Sleeper – 14/4	GCT-Boston	1	1	1	1	1	-	1*
Sleeper – 14/4	GCT-Boston	1	1	1	1	-	-	1
Sleeper – 14/4	GCT-Boston	1	1	1	1	-	-	1
Sleeper – 14SB	GCT-Boston	1	1	1	1	1	-	1
Sleeper – 14/4	GCT-Boston	1	1	1	1	1	-	1
Sleeper – 14/4	GCT-Boston	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Sleeper – 12/1	GCT-Providence	1	1	1	1	1	-	1
Sleeper - 14/4	GCT-Providence	1	1	1	1	-	-	1
Coach - Streamline	GCT-Boston	-	-	-	-	-	3	-

\* Will not operate July 9 through August 31

<b>Train 3 – <i>The Owl</i>, Boston-New York, Daily</b>								
Car	Route	Mo n	Tue s	We d	Thu r	Fri	Sat	Su n
Baggage (Deadhead)	Boston-GCT	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Coach - Stainless Steel	Boston-GCT	1	1	1	1	6	2	7
Sleeper –14/4	Boston-GCT	1	1	1	1	1	-	1

Sleeper –14/4	Boston-GCT	1	1	1	1	1	-	1
Sleeper –14SB	Boston-GCT	1	1	1	1	1	-	1
Sleeper –14/4	Boston-GCT	1	1	1	1	-	-	1
Sleeper –14/4	Boston-GCT	1	1	1	1	-	-	1
Sleeper –14/4	Boston-GCT	1	1	1	1	1	-	1*
Sleeper –14/4	Boston-GCT	1	1	1	1	1	-	1*
Sleeper –14/4	Boston-GCT	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Sleeper –10/1/2	Boston-GCT	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Sleeper – 14/4	Boston-GCT	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Baggage – Papers	Boston-Providence	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Sleeper – 12/1	Providence - GCT	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Sleeper – 14/4	Providence – GCT	1	1	1	1	-	-	1

Notes:

\*Not operate July 9 through August 31

Train to operate in two sections when more than 16 cars

Sleeper – 12/1	GCT-Providence								
Coach – Stainless Steel	GCT-Boston	3	3	3	3	5	-	1	
Coach – Streamline	GCT-Boston	-	-	-	-	-	-	11	Advance section Sunday
Parlor – Deadhead	GCT-New Haven	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	Advance section Sunday

**Train 4 –The Narragansett, New York-Boston, Daily**

Car	Route	Mo n	Tu e	Wed	Th ur	F ri	Sat	Su n	Notes
Storage	GCT - So. Norwalk	1	1	1	1	1	-	1	
RPO	GCT-Springfield	1	1	1	1	1	-	1	To 410 at NH
Storage	Springfield-New London	-	1	1	1	1	-	-	From 97 at (Mail and Express) at NH
Express	New Haven-Boston	-	1	1	1	1	-	-	
RPO	GCT-Boston	1	1	1	1	1	-	1	
Storage	GCT-Boston	1	1	1	1	1	-	1	
Baggage	GCT-Boston	1	1	1	1	1	-	1	
Sleeper – 14/4	GCT-Boston								Operate May 29, July 3, and September 2 only
Sleeper – 10/1/2	GCT-Boston								

**Train 3 – The Owl, Boston-New York, Daily**

Car	Route	Mo n.	Tue s.	We d.	Th.	Fr i.	Sa t.	Sun .	Connection
Express	Boston-Harrisburg	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	To 181 NH
Express	Boston-Washington	-	1	1	1	1	1	-	To 181 NH
Express	Boston-Jacksonville	-	1	1	1	1	1	-	To 181 NH
Express	Boston-Richmond	-	1	1	1	1	-	-	To 181 NH
Express	Boston-Atlanta	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Express	Boston-Trenton	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Express	Boston-Providence	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	To 169 NH
Mail-Storage	Boston-Jacksonville	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	“ “
Mail-Storage	Boston-Philadelphia	-	1	1	1	1	1	-	“ “
Mail-Storage	Boston-Indianapolis	-	1	1	1	1	1	-	“ “
Mail-Storage	Boston-Dallas	-	1	1	1	1	1	-	“ “
Mail-Storage	Boston-St. Louis	-	1	1	1	1	1	-	“ “
Mail-Storage	Boston-Harrisburg	-	1	1	1	1	1	-	To 181 NH
Mail-Storage	Boston-Philadelphia	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	To 175 NH
Mail-Storage	Boston-Trenton	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	“ “
RPO	Boston-GCT	1	1	1	1	1	1	-	
Baggage	Boston-GCT	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
Coach	Boston-GCT	2	1	1	1	1	-	-	
Sleeper (4-6-4)	Boston-GCT	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
Sleeper (14-4)	Boston-GCT	1	1	1	1	1	-	-	
Sleeper (14-4)	Providence-GCT	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Coach	Boston-GCT	-	-	-	-	-	2	1	
Coach	New Haven-GCT	2	3	3	3	3	1	1	

Table 5: Consist of *The Owl*, April 1965

<b>Train 2 – <i>The Owl</i>, New York-Boston, Except Saturday</b>								
Car	Route	Sun.	Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Th	Fri	Connection
Mail-Storage	GCT-South Norwalk	1	1	1	1	1	1	
Express	Harlem River-Providence	-	1	1	1	1	1	From HB-8NH
Express	Harlem River-Boston	-	3	3	3	3	3	“ “
Express	Pittsburgh-Boston	1	1	1	1	1	1	From 98 NH
Express	Jacksonville-Boston	1	1	1	-	1	1	“ “
RPO	GCT-Boston	1	1	1	1	1	1	
Mail-Storage	GCT-Boston	1	1	1	1	1	1	
Baggage	GCT-Boston	2	1	1	1	1	1	
Coach	GCT-Boston	5	2	2	2	3	3	
Sleeper (4-6-4)	GCT-Boston	1	1	1	1	1	1	
Sleeper (14-4)	GCT-Boston	1	1	1	1	1	1	
<b>Train 4 – <i>The Owl</i>, New York-Boston, Saturday only</b>								
Express	New Haven-Boston	1						
Express	Pittsburgh-Boston	1		To #32 at NH				
Newspapers	New York-Boston	1		To #32 at NH				
Newspapers ( <i>Times</i> )	New York-Boston	1						
Baggage (Papers)	New York-Boston	1						
Sleeper (6-4-6)	New York-Boston	1		#41				
Coach	New York Boston-	3						
From #96 (Mail and Express train) at New Haven Train #32 was the Sunday-only Mail and Express								

## The Depression-era Owl

Changes to the train operations were made over the years in conjunction with *The Narragansett*. In November 1930 *The Owl*, trains 2 and 3, featured the normal variety of sleepers (single room cars or cars with combinations of

Boston. On Saturday nights, the eastbound train carried a sleeper for Providence, which was an added stop on Sunday morning. When the New Haven Railroad promoted *The Owl* in the late 1930s, it boasted that the train had an average speed of 36 m.p.h., was air-conditioned, and had sections, drawing rooms, compartments, and bedrooms. It remained an all-Pullman train, providing an important means of overnight transportation between these two major cities.

The operations of *The Narragansett* in each direction varied during most of the years it ran. Eastbound train 4 ran daily from New York to Providence, with sleeping cars and coaches daily except Saturday, and ran on Saturdays only with coaches. Westbound train 5 ran daily, originating at South Station with Boston–New York sleepers (except Saturday) and single-room and other Providence–New York sleeping cars, and through coaches Boston–New York.

Due to the Depression-induced drop in passenger traffic, by April 1937 the train had lost its all-Pullman status, with coaches added to both trains on Saturday nights. The eastbound Owl was downgraded, with intermediate stops at New Haven, New London, and Providence on Saturdays out of New York. The train ran with the usual array of sleepers and offered coaches only on Saturday nights. Westbound, it train ran as Nos. 1 and 3. Train 3 ran daily except Saturday, with the usual complement of sleepers, Boston–New York and no coaches. Train 1 ran on Saturdays, with intermediate stops at Providence, New London, New Haven, and 125th Street in New York. Again, the train offered the usual array of sleeper accommodations, Boston–New York, and picked up sleeping cars at Providence. It also included Boston–New York coaches.

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New Dalton, New Millport, Prairie Center, Prairie View, Star Beach, Star Finch, Star Trail, Algeciras, Theseum, and 14-single-bedroom sleepers Nightfall, Night Haven, Night Trail, and Nightvale. The train also had 10-1-2 (10 section-1 drawing room-2 compartment) sleepers Fort Riley, Fostoria, Pasadena, and Pueblo. The Narragansett had 12-1 sleepers Tofield, Vancura, and Vanomi, and 8 single bedroom-5 double bedroom sleepers Orchard Dale and Orchard Gardens. Trains 2 and 5 had 12-1 sleepers Verada and Vindex. Train 5 had 10-2 sleeper Point Rich, while trains 4/5 had 12-1 sleeper Wyaconda. Train 5 also had a deluxe smoker in the 6800-6823 series, and trains 4 and 5 had streamlined coaches in the 8200-8269 series.

Operations of *The Owl* and *The Narragansett* did not change significantly through 1941, after which there was a large increase in traffic due to the war. In May 1945, while the country was still at war, there were normally 12 sleeping cars eastbound and 11 cars westbound in addition to a baggage car. Eastbound train 2 had four cars with single bedrooms and eight cars with various combinations of sections, drawing rooms, and compartments, New York-Boston, and a single 12-1 car on Saturday nights only, New York-Providence, and New York-Boston coaches on Saturday nights only. The train stopped daily at Back Bay, and on Saturday nights stopped at 125th Street, Stamford, Bridgeport, New Haven, New London, and Providence. Westbound the train was No. 1 (Saturday nights) and No. 3 (daily except Saturday nights). Train 1 had one single-bedroom car and four cars with sections, drawing rooms, and compartments (Boston-New York), a car with sections and a drawing room (Providence-New York), and coaches (Boston-New York). Train 3 had four single-bedroom cars and seven sleepers with sections, drawing rooms, and compartments (Boston-New York) but no coaches.

Saturday. Train 4 had one single-bedroom car and one sleeping car with sections and a drawing room (New York–Providence), one sleeping car with sections and drawing room (New York–Boston), and coaches (New York–Boston). The train also stopped at 125th Street, Stamford, Bridgeport, New Haven, New London, and Back Bay. Nameless train 32 ran New York–Boston on a slightly different schedule on Saturday nights. Train 5 had one single-room sleeping car and a 12–1 sleeper (Providence–New York), two 12–1s and coaches (Boston–New York). It had intermediate stops at Back Bay, New London, New Haven, Bridgeport, Stamford, and 125th street.

Effective July 15, 1945, the sleeping cars on *The Owl* were discontinued per order of the Federal Office of Transportation, which prohibited sleeping-car service on runs less than 450 miles. This was to make it easier to return the armed forces back home as part of the demobilization effort. The railroad assigned parlor cars to the trains, complete with porters in an effort to maintain the status of *The Owl*. The lounge cars were opened at 9pm so that passengers had ample opportunities for liquid refreshment prior to departure. Presumably parlor cars from the Merchants Limited or Yankee Clipper were used. On March 15, 1946, the Office of Defense Transportation rescinded this ruling on sleeping cars, and the New Haven immediately restored sleeping-car service on *The Owl* and *Narragansett*.





Anchor stations of The Owl: Grand Central Terminal, opened in 1913, and Boston's South Station, opened in 1899. The Owl—and the New Haven Railroad itself—has been gone nearly 50 years, but these two terminals remain transportation citadels for New York and Boston. postcard, mike schaffer collection; south station main entrance in 2015, passenger train journal/Mike Schafer

## ***The Owl, post-World War II***

In October 1946, the New Haven ordered 27 all-room lightweight sleeping cars from Pullman-Standard for *The Owl* and *The Federal* since the railroad did not have any modern sleeping cars. The cars were named in the Point series, with a 14 roomette—4 double bedroom arrangement. The first one was placed in service on *The Owl* on Dec. 15, 1949.

After World War II, the New Haven re-introduced special excursion rates, but did not reinstate the special trains for the excursionists. Instead, late-night passengers using the excursion rates between New York and Boston on the Shore Line would ride *The Owl* on Friday and *The Narragansett* on Saturday, and return on *The Owl* on Sunday nights.

The westbound Narragansett was discontinued in 1949, but the remaining night trains still had substantial consists. In September 1950, for example, train No. 2, *The Owl*, ran eastbound daily with ten sleeping cars featuring berths, drawing rooms, compartments, roomettes, and single and double bedrooms (New York–Boston); two sleeping cars with berths, drawing rooms, roomettes, and single and double bedrooms (New York–Providence); and coaches-only on Saturdays. New York–Boston. Westbound train No. 3 *The*

cars with berths, drawing rooms, roomettes, and single and double bedrooms (Providence–New York), and coaches (Boston–New York). There were intermediate stops at Back Bay and New Haven. Train 4 (Narragansett) normally had only coaches, New York–Boston. There were intermediate stops at Bridgeport, New Haven, New London, and Back Bay.

On April 29, 1951, the car assignments for *The Owl* specified 14 roomette–4 double bedroom Allyns Point for train 3, returning on train 26, the Merchants Limited. Trains 2 and 3 also had 14–4 sleeping cars Beaver Tail Point, City Point, Goshen Point, Gull Point, Monomoy Point, Morgan Point, Napatree Point, North Point, Pond Point, Quonset Point, Race Point, Rocky Point, Stratford Point, and Wilson Point, all Boston–New York. The Providence–New York line was covered by India Point and Long Point. The train also was assigned heavyweight sleepers 12–1 Anatok and East Columbia and 10–1–2 heavyweight sleepers Pasadena and Pueblo and 14-single-bedroom sleepers Night Cove and Nightland. Trains 3 and 4 were also assigned reclining seat/lounge cars in the 8500–8529 series.



For a regional carrier, the New Haven fielded a considerable number of

roomette—4 double bedroom cars, such as Shippan Point, shown at New Haven in 1959. Dick Baldwin



A stranger in former New Haven territory, an ex-Pennsylvania Railroad E8A —renumbered as Penn Central 4255—and a PC-painted E-unit head up an on-time eastbound Federal rushing into Boston on a June morning in 1970. Mike Schafer

## **Decline of *The Owl***

Traffic on the train continued strong into the 1950s. In July 1955 the

Route 128 outside of Boston. The train stopped at New London on Saturday nights. Westbound, it had 12 sleeping cars and coaches, with intermediate stops at Back Bay, Route 128, and New Haven. *The Narragansett* continued to run with New York–Boston coaches, but no westbound counterpart.

By this time the railroad had introduced its new 6 section–6 roomette–4 double bedroom Beach series sleeping cars. They were delivered at the end of 1954 and in early 1955, and were immediately assigned to *The Owl*. Car assignments in October 1955 were 14–4 sleepers Allyns Point, Beaver Tail Point, Black Point, City Point, Cornfield Point, East Point, Goshen Point, Gull Point, Idaho Point (spare), Long Point (spare), Lookout Point, Lords Point, Manomet Point, Mishaum Point, Monomoy Point, Morgan Point, Napatree Point, and Race Point. The 6–6–4 sleepers assigned were Crescent Beach, Grove Beach, and Rocky Neck Beach. Heavyweight sleepers with 8 sections–5 single bedrooms were Orchard Dale and Orchard Garden. These were all NH cars. Pullman cars assigned to the train were 10–1–2 sleepers Lake French and Lake Onota. Trains 3 and 4 had NH coaches in the 8200 series, and trains 2, 3, and 4 all had coaches in the 8600 series, although *The Owl* still carried coaches only on Saturday night.

The eastbound Narragansett was discontinued in 1958, and *The Owl* now carried New York–Boston coaches and sleeping cars seven days a week. There were also New York–Providence sleeping cars daily except Friday and Saturday nights. The westbound train had Boston–New York and Providence–New York sleepers and Boston–New York coaches seven days a week.

By 1965, *The Owl* had become a mail-and-express train carrying coaches and sleeping cars. Coaches now outnumbered sleepers. Train 4, the Saturday night

Car assignments at this time included Manomet Point, Beaver Tail Point, and Long Point, and a 14-4 on trains 2 and 3. The 6-6-4 cars assigned to train Nos. 2, 3, and 4 were Bailey's Beach, Crescent Beach, and Grove Beach.

The weekday New York-Providence sleeper was discontinued in 1965. By 1966, near the end of the train's life, the service had declined even further. The occupancy times of 12:15am at Grand Central and 12:20am in Boston were not conducive to passengers' convenience.

As late as 1967 the train had two sleeping cars, two coaches, and two head-end cars. The New Haven was anxious to discontinue the train, and posted a notice of intent effective July 16, 1967. Westbound train 3 was to continue to run between New Haven and New York, Monday through Friday. However, the trains continued to run until NH became part of Penn Central on Jan. 1, 1969, and were discontinued in February. Shortly before it was discontinued, the train was down to an FL9 locomotive and three cars. *The Federal*, the night train that ran between Washington and Boston, operated through the advent of Amtrak on May 1, 1971, until it, too, was discontinued.v