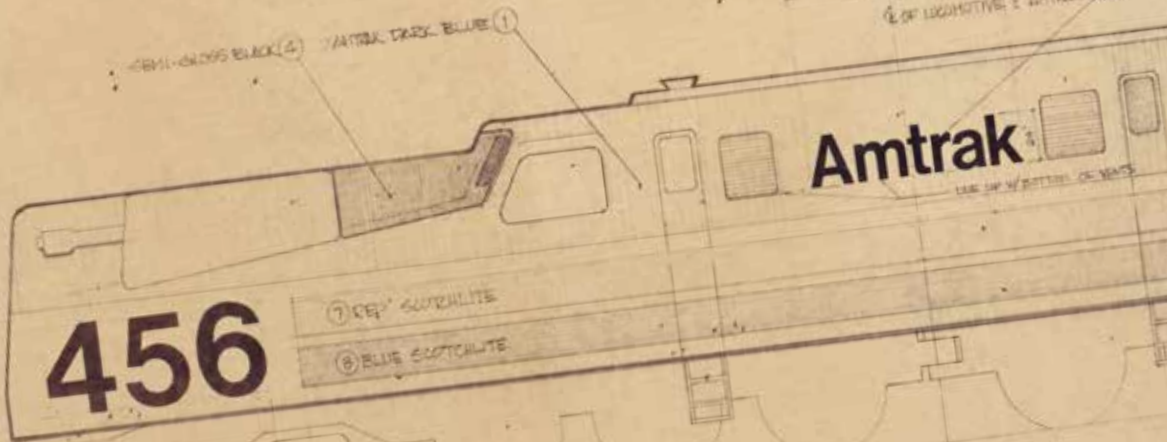
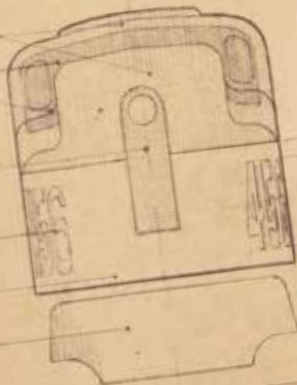


AMTRAK'S that might have been

GG 1

- 1) AMTRAK DARK BLUE
- 4) SEMI-GLOSS BLACK
- 2) AMTRAK RED
- 6) BLACK IMPRINTS AT HIGH PRESSURE COATING DIE
- 3) WHITE
- 1) AMTRAK DARK BLUE



AMTRAK DARK BLUE 1

NOTE
TYPEFACE FOR ALL

MATERIAL SPECIFICATIONS	
FINISH	MATERIAL
1) AMTRAK DARK BLUE	P42 L CT
2) AMTRAK RED	P42 R CRD
3) WHITE	P42 W CEE
4) SEMI-GLOSS BLACK	

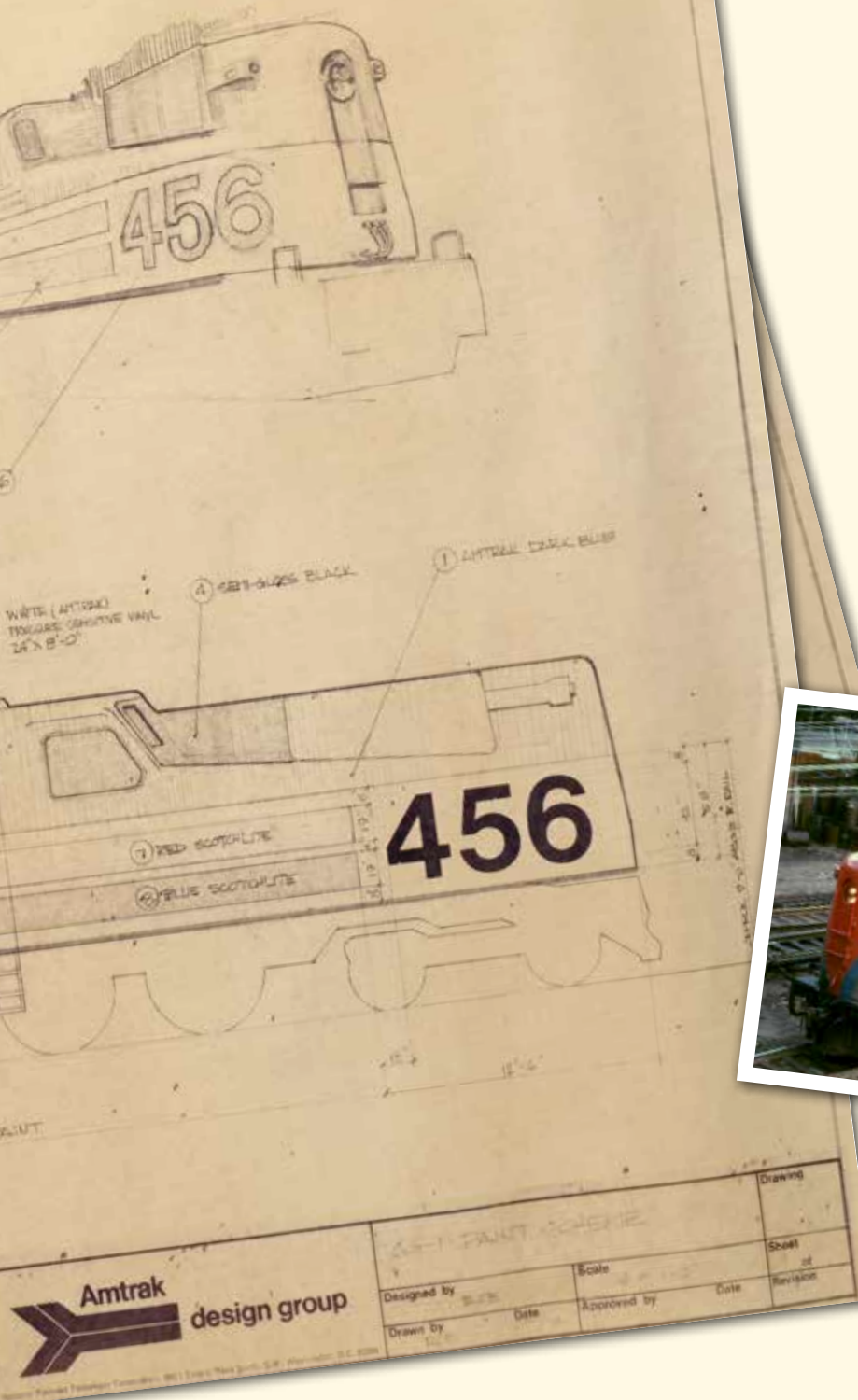
GG1

After a few GG1s received Amtrak's garish new paint scheme, men in the company's design department toyed with an equally striking alternative

By Denny Hamilton

More than a dozen different paint schemes graced various members of the famous GG1 fleet during the locomotives' 49-year career. Most fondly remembered are the Pennsylvania Railroad pin-stripe and solid-stripe liveries the class carried during 1935–1968. Penn Central's solid black that followed was unpopular, but perhaps most reviled of all was the garish scheme Amtrak introduced in 1972. Even some designers within Amtrak were dissatisfied with this, and they devised an alternative. Although it was never implemented, the proposal would have been the most striking of all GG1 paint schemes.

The Amtrak that hired me in 1974 as a Sales Representative Trainee was very different from the Amtrak of today. It had none of its own track; operating crews were still employed by the railroads; and most of the rolling stock had been built for various railroads decades before. Sure, there were French-built Turboliners in the Midwest, and two United Aircraft Turbos in the Northeast, and 150 new SDP40F diesels were supplementing



A faded blueprint depicts an intriguing alternative to Amtrak's unloved "red-nose baboon" GG1 paint scheme. Freshly painted No. 902 models the "baboon" livery at Sunnyside Yard, New York, on May 6, 1972.

Blueprint, Denny Hamilton collection; photo, George Krambles, Krambles-Peterson Archive

aging E units on short- and long-haul trains. Former Amtrak President W. Graham Claytor once described the early Amtrak as "... not a true railroad but a contracting organization that operated and maintained its trains only through agreement with the freight railroads."

Despite my concerns over the future of a company like this, I said farewell to an enjoyable job on the Mississippi River steamboat *Delta Queen* to take a gamble on Amtrak. After all, trains were my first love. I was one of seven new management trainees, all about a year out of college. Amtrak needed Sales Representatives because it was beginning to solicit business through travel agents and tour operators.

Our class of trainees was based out of Amtrak's L'Enfant Plaza headquarters in Washington, D.C. We went through a two-month training period. Many of the trainees were unfamiliar with the business, and the course could have been titled "Passenger Trains 101." But if you were of the passenger-train persuasion, as I was, Amtrak HQ was the place to be! None of the other trainees in my group shared my enthusiasm for trains, but most came to love working for Amtrak, and many had long careers there.

As part of our training, we visited the major departments within headquarters. One of the most interesting was the Design Group, a small department of about six people. They were saddled with the responsibility of creating an identity for the new company, and putting a new face on a very old product.

Ralph Dolinger, then 28 years old, was a designer in this department. On the job from the first day of Amtrak — May 1, 1971 — he was Amtrak employee



No. 7! Ralph describes his old department: "We established all graphics, paint, and printed ink standards, and controlled the company identity all the way to repair trucks and support vehicles. We worked with other departments as if they were customers. Damn fun job with minimal pay. The small group had no bureaucracy or redundancy of efforts formed yet, unlike most old railroads."

Bob Bengtsson, now deceased, was Amtrak's Director of Design at the time. His designs were evident on Amtrak's biggest projects, including locomotives and cars. He was the head of the department, and most designs went out with his initials attached. Ralph Dolinger describes his boss as "a great guy, a showman, and a great compromiser, with the

ability to suck up to anybody."

Despite his popularity, not all of Bengtsson's designs were home runs. He is the man who designed the silver-blue-red GG1 scheme of 1972. Although it followed the contours of the streamlined carbody to a degree, the loud livery soon acquired several derisive nicknames that included terms like "circus," "disco," "W. C. Fields," and "Rudolph" (the latter two referring to the scheme's red noses). Another moniker, widely used around Amtrak headquarters except around the Design Group, was "red-nosed baboon."

Ralph says he would never laugh at a design done by one of his superiors, but when he saw the first "baboon," his reaction was visceral: "I think I might have peed my pants!"

In defense of Bengtsson, Ralph says the scheme was the result of a compro-



The proposed GG1 scheme reminded author Hamilton of a Nickel Plate PA, an image recreated by Doyle McCormack on his ex-Santa Fe unit (above, at Spencer, N.C., in 2014). Only six Gs got the "baboon" look; most remained black, like No. 4932 on *Metroliner Service* train 119 at Philadelphia in 1980.

Two photos, Robert S. McGonigal



AMTRAK'S GG1 that might have been



mise. The story (which may be steeped in legend) goes that the U.S. Department of Transportation was not happy that Amtrak was running high-speed trains with black GG1s. Bengtsson specified red for the ends to appease the DOT folks by making the locomotives more visible. The red ends were certainly eye-catching, but something seemed to be wrong with the metallic silver that covered most of the carbody — it just didn't look right. "Eventually," Ralph says, "it was determined that Penn Central's Wilmington Shops did not have the proper paint apparatus. So they *brush-painted* the metallic silver! The shop had been painting black GG1s for years with brushes and rollers."

A PLAN FROM THE PAST

After 41 years, I do not remember much about our trainee group's visit to the designers, but one of the staff did give me several blueprints of then-current Amtrak locomotives. One of the blueprints was of a proposed new paint scheme for the GG1 fleet. It was striking, unlike anything ever seen at Amtrak. It was a dark blue-over-white arrangement, with wide blue and red stripes along the side and dark blue running gear. I imagined that there hadn't been so much blue and white on a passenger locomotive since the Nickel Plate Road's Alco PAs!

Another arresting element of the design was the immense road numbers.

The late Kevin Martin was an Amtrak designer from that era. He told me Amtrak was changing its thoughts on how its equipment should look. He said, "At that time we in the Design Department quietly got rid of the 'pointless arrow' logo on the equipment, which we all hated." Their idea was to gradually phase out the logo, one project at a time.

As the decades passed, I had always wondered who designed the proposed GG1 scheme and why it was never implemented. To answer these questions, I mailed the drawing to Ralph Dolinger, who immediately recognized it.

"How did you get this?" he asked. "That's my drawing. The concept itself was from Bob Bengtsson, and I was the one that did the drawing. The date has faded on the drawing, but it was done in early 1974. There might have been other proposals, but those probably were thrown away long ago. The strategy was that if you bombarded management with several designs, one would stick. I suppose that the GG1s were living on borrowed time by then, so nothing was ever done, and the big-wigs never approved

The 1974 livery was unlike any other applied to Amtrak locomotives. The white on the lower part of the noses would have turned a perpetual gray, as the coachyard car washing machines could not reach those areas.

CLASSIC TRAINS: Rick Johnson

anything more for the GG1s."

Indeed, by the end of 1974 the first new E60 electrics began arriving from General Electric, dressed in silver with big blue and red stripes reminiscent of Bengtsson's GG1 proposal. Only six Gs received the "baboon" look; most stayed in Penn Central black, with Amtrak's name in place of the PC markings. Disappointed with the E60s, Amtrak looked overseas for a new type of electric locomotive, settling on a Swedish design. Deliveries of the American version, the AEM7, began in late 1979, and Amtrak retired its last GG1s in May 1981.

Amtrak in 1974 did not expect its GG1s to last that long. Had their true lifetime been foreseen, Bengtsson's dramatic paint scheme might have gone beyond the blueprint stage. ■