

PhotoSpecial

Penn Central and its



predecessors

50 years

after one of railroading's most consequential mergers,

we look back at the

Pennsylvania,

New York Central,

and New Haven

railroads and the troubled

product of their union —

Penn Central



The versatile, inexpensive GP38 (and its GP38-2 successor) was Penn Central's signature diesel. None of the road's three predecessors bought any, but PC amassed a fleet of nearly 500 between 1969 and 1973. Here, GP38 7895 crosses Dutoit Street in Dayton, Ohio, in August 1971. PRR and NYC merged February 1, 1968, to form PC, which took in NH January 1, 1969.

David P. Oroszi

PENNSYLVANIA





At Duncannon, Pa., near the east end of PRR's Harrisburg-Pittsburgh main line, an Alco RS27 and two F units lead tonnage east past View tower, whose operators looked out on a sweeping panorama of the Susquehanna River valley. The first and third units carry antennas for PRR's Trainphone communication system; the largest rail user by far, PRR retired the system in favor of conventional radio two years after this 1964 photo.

R. R. Malinoski, Frank and Todd Novak collection



Pennsy referred to its armada of passenger trains between the East Coast and Midwest as its Blue Ribbon Fleet. By May 1963, when the *Spirit of St. Louis*, heavy with head-end business, approached its namesake destination, the Fleet was more burdensome than beneficial to the big road, but it was still a source of pride.

Frank and Todd Novak collection

Near Edison, N.J., on September 18, 1962, a GG1 with a train out of Washington, D.C., overtakes MP54 commuter cars grinding toward New York. Thanks to the PRR's investment in this vital artery decades earlier, the Northeast Corridor, as it would soon be known, was poised to become the showcase of American rail travel.

Tom Gildersleeve

NEW YORK CENTRAL



Only three passengers enjoy the comforts of a *Creek*-series car's observation lounge at the rear of NYC's *20th Century Limited* near Chicago on March 23, 1963. Though no longer all-Pullman, the *Century* remained the leader of what NYC once called its Great Steel Fleet until its demise less than two months before the Penn Central merger.

Bob Krone



NYC's gray-and-white "lightning stripes" looked good on everything from ancient box-cab electrics to road-switchers. Like other roads, NYC adopted a simplified scheme as its fortunes declined. Here, Alco FA freight units display the classic livery and the later "cigar band" image with the final version of NYC's oval emblem.

Jim McClellan

With 50 E7As and Bs and 62 E8As, NYC was second only to PRR in E-unit ownership. In September 1966, E8 4072 and E7 4013 approach the Poughkeepsie, N.Y., station with an eastbound train, the first car carrying NYC's innovative Flexivan containers. The unusual view is from a train on the New Haven's bridge over the Hudson River. J. W. Swanberg



NEW HAVEN



Four New Haven "Washboard" M.U. cars pull away from the station at Rye, N.Y., in July 1965; traveling under a web of wires here, the train began its run on third-rail power at Grand Central Terminal. Pullman-Standard built 100 such cars at its Worcester, Mass., plant in 1954; they replaced 150 cars from the early years of NH's electrification, which began in 1907.

William Harry



On March 25, 1966, RS3s 534 and 538 bring freight NX-3 past the station at Canaan, Conn., on the line along the Housatonic River between Pittsfield, Mass., and Danbury, Conn. New Haven was an ardent Alco diesel customer, beginning with 20 pre-war high-hood switchers and three-quarters of all DL109-family units built.

J. W. Swanberg



Diesels of five models from four different builders share the engine terminal tracks with former Virginian/Norfolk & Western electrics at Cedar Hill Yard near New Haven in the early 1960s. The Alco, EMD, Fairbanks-Morse, and GE units display variations of the colors adopted during Patrick McGinnis's brief, ill-starred time as NH president. Jim McClellan



PENN CENTRAL



The venerable *Pennsylvania Limited* has rounded Horseshoe Curve and is a few minutes away from its Altoona, Pa., station stop on September 13, 1970. Ahead of the two E8s that have brought No. 54 from Chicago are ex-PRR C630 6323 and SD45 6265, taking a break from helping freights over the mountain.

David P. Oroszi



Former NYC U25Bs 2540 and 2523 bracket PC-purchased GP40 3182 on a freight heading north along the Hudson River on the ex-NYC West Shore line at Peekskill, N.Y. The giant railroad appears prosperous enough on this sunny September 30, 1974, but it's more than four years into bankruptcy.

J. W. Swanberg



A crewman on the front platform of ex-PRR GP9 7061 signals the engineer as they ease south down the middle of Hickory Street in Warsaw, Ind., with an N9 local-service caboose and a gondola car on June 23, 1971. PC resignaled this former NYC line south from Goshen, Ind., with PRR-style position lights.

Art Peterson, Krambles-Peterson Archive

PENN CENTRAL



With more than 800 route-miles — and thousands more track-miles — under wire or beside third rail, Penn Central was nirvana for fans of electric rail-roading. Three former New Haven EP-5 "Jets" and a GG1 await assignment on the Motor Storage tracks near the station at New Haven on February 17, 1973.

George W. Hamlin



The nearly 200 ex-PRR GG1s and E44s were the backbone of PC's electric locomotive fleet. Motors assigned to freight service rarely saw a wash rack and built up a thick layer of grime, as seen on GG1 4800 and E44 4454 at the Meadows engine terminal near Newark, N.J., on May 13, 1973.

J. W. Swanberg

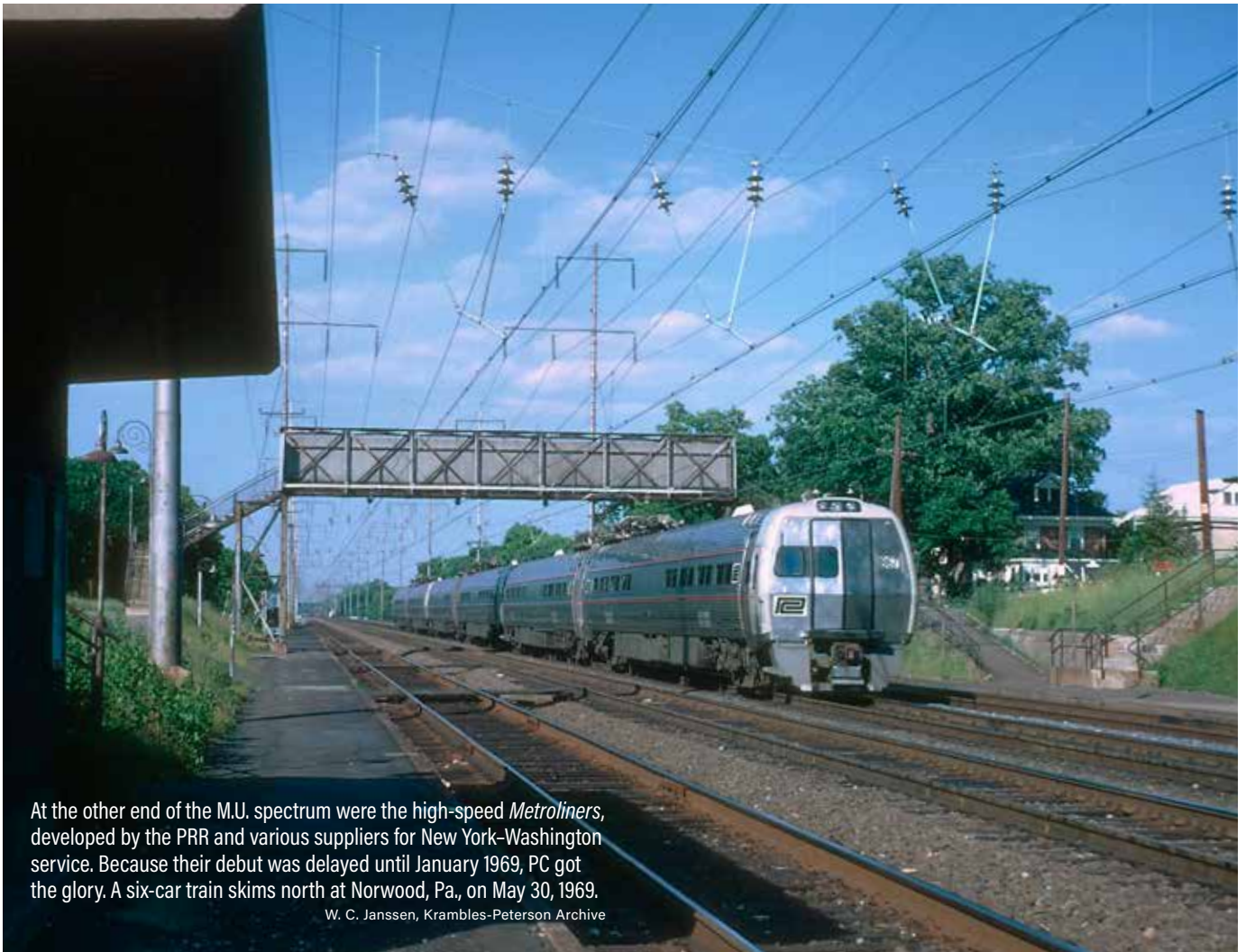


PC's elder statesmen were the S motors, some of which dated from the start of NYC's third-rail operations in 1906. Long since relegated to switching duty, they outlasted newer NYC electrics and even PC itself. Nos. 4731 and 4733 stand outside the electric shop at Harmon in November 1973.

J. W. Swanberg



Penn Central inherited a number of NH's ancient trailer-motor-trailer M.U. sets, two of which (in NH and PC greens) roll east under triangular catenary at Port Chester, N.Y., in August 1970. The legions of commuters who depended on PC ensured that the road's troubles were acutely felt by a wide public.
George Krambles, Krambles-Peterson Archive



At the other end of the M.U. spectrum were the high-speed *Metroliners*, developed by the PRR and various suppliers for New York-Washington service. Because their debut was delayed until January 1969, PC got the glory. A six-car train skims north at Norwood, Pa., on May 30, 1969.

W. C. Janssen, Krambles-Peterson Archive

PENN CENTRAL

The *Admiral* slinks out of Chicago on its final run to Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, and New York on April 30, 1971. The following day Amtrak, created largely to relieve Penn Central of the burden of intercity passenger service, would do just that.

George W. Hamlin





A former New York Central caboose trails a boxcar still lettered for PRR across the Detroit, Toledo & Ironton at Maitland tower near Springfield, Ohio, on December 12, 1971. The 19,000-mile Penn Central rolled into history after only 8 years and 2 months when it and five other, much smaller bankrupt roads were grouped into Conrail on the first day of April, 1976.

David P. Oroszi

