

Yankee



Regionals in Review



IF YOU think of the modern regional railroad as a new concept, consider that today's Providence & Worcester, perhaps the first of the "recent" ones, has come of age. Yes, the modern P&W celebrated its 21st anniversary of independent operation on February 3, 1994. It now operates on 406 route-miles in Rhode Island, Massachusetts, and Connecticut, most of it former New Haven Railroad, with some ex-Boston & Maine trackage.

Unlike most other modern regionals, which are new organizations established to operate trackage cast off by

larger systems, Providence & Worcester has existed continuously since the 1840's, owning the 43-mile line that connects its namesake cities in Rhode Island and Massachusetts plus a 6-mile branch to East Providence. Today's P&W still runs those lines, and owns an additional 131 route-miles in the three states. P&W also provides freight service to customers on 151 miles of essentially passenger lines—Amtrak's Northeast Corridor between Providence and New Haven, and two Connecticut branches of Metro-North Commuter (MNCR). P&W also utilizes overhead trackage rights on Metro-North,

independence

How Providence & Worcester grew from being an obscure branch of the New Haven into today's 400-mile regional

BY SCOTT HARTLEY

PHOTOS BY THE AUTHOR



Conrail, and Danbury Terminal Railroad Company, a new subsidiary of another, smaller new regional, Housatonic Railroad in Connecticut.

Over its 150 years, Providence & Worcester evolved from one of hundreds of small New England railroads. After operating independently for its first 40 years, P&W was leased to larger railroads and became part of the New York, New Haven & Hartford in 1893.

Most of the New Haven's rail acquisitions were made through merger or purchase, but NH acquired only 28 percent of P&W's stock. This was what would allow

today's regional to re-emerge in 1973. Providence & Worcester became part of the growing New Haven system through a 99-year lease. From 1893 onward, P&W was operated as a New Haven line, and NH paid P&W's property taxes, maintenance costs, and an annual rental of \$350,000. This lease income was distributed to P&W stockholders each year as a \$10-per-share dividend.

New Haven's eagerness to control everything that moved by rail in its region resulted in a system of duplicative lines. While leased to the New Haven, the Providence & Worcester was never more than a branch line,

P&W has the freight rights on Amtrak's Northeast Corridor between Providence and New Haven. Locals NR-2 and NH-1 meet and exchange cars at Old Saybrook, Conn., on September 24, 1993.



Nowhere else in the U.S. could you find GM/GE/MLW consists like this, on NR-2 along the Thames at Gales Ferry, Conn., May 18, 1992.

although the many factories along it yielded revenues until they began to close after World War II. The route was a link for freight moving to and from Rhode Island and southeastern Massachusetts, connecting with New York Central (Boston & Albany) and Boston & Maine at Worcester. Passenger service ended in the 1950's.

The New Haven entered its second bankruptcy in 1961, and in 1969 the railroad was forced upon the new Penn Central, the creation of the previous year's merger of the Pennsylvania Railroad and the New York Central. PC continued the lease payments to the P&W corporation until declaring bankruptcy in June 1970. At that time, Penn Central announced plans to abandon much of the P&W. Diesels wearing PC's emblem apparently would not ply the line.

P&W had not operated its railroad since 1888, but some stockholders remained very interested in how their property was being used by its tenants. In the early 1960's, Robert H. Eder had led a group of dissident stockholders in a successful proxy fight, and Eder became P&W's new president.

Eder suggested P&W might resume independent operation. Remember that this was at a time when large rail mergers were occurring with regularity. Spin-offs were uncommon, and the idea of

a resurrected P&W seemed quite ridiculous.

Penn Central wasn't eager to give back all of the P&W. The giant railroad wanted to keep serving the large customers at either end of the line, and PC also coveted P&W's valuable real estate holdings, particularly in downtown Providence. With PC the largest single owner of P&W stock, it appeared the little railroad's chances were slim.

However, a curious voting clause in the corporation's original 1844 charter saved the P&W. The clause apparently had been designed to limit the clout of large stockholders. Even though PC owned 28 percent of P&W stock, PC's voting power amounted to only 3 percent.

PC challenged the voting clause in court and petitioned the Interstate Commerce Commission regarding the unilateral breaking of the 99-year operating lease. Providence & Worcester ultimately prevailed on both issues.

Independence and innovation

Meanwhile, P&W had begun independent operation on Sunday, February 3, 1973. It had leased five Alco RS3 diesels and five wooden cabooses from Delaware & Hudson, all painted in a new and attractive cream, orange, and chocolate livery.

The railroad consisted of the Worcester-Providence main line and the Valley Falls-East Providence branch. P&W also handled two PC branches that had become isolated: the 3-mile Slatersville branch at Woonsocket, R.I., and the 1-mile remnant of the Wrentham (Mass.) branch at Valley Falls. P&W set up its maintenance base in the old New Haven enginehouse in Worcester, with business headquarters at East Providence.

Not gracious in defeat, Penn Central

clearly was not eager to help the new line succeed. Delays and difficulties in interchange plagued P&W for the first few months, and the railroad returned to the ICC to seek relief from PC's tactics.

P&W quickly realized that its future success depended upon having more than one connecting railroad. The only other large road in the area was Boston & Maine, whose east-west main line ran parallel to, and north of, PC's Boston & Albany line. To gain efficient access, in October 1974 P&W purchased B&M's little-used 21-mile branch between Barber (Worcester) and Gardner, Mass., on the main. Included were 3 miles of B&M trackage rights in Worcester. This gave P&W a 68-mile through route between Providence and Gardner.

Soon after independence, P&W began shopping for its own new motive power. Strangely, it eschewed America's two remaining builders, General Motors' Electro-Motive Division and General Electric, and instead chose Canada's Montreal Locomotive Works, which was trying to break into the U.S. market following the exit from the business in 1969 by its American affiliate, Alco. P&W ordered five MLW M420R's, to be built to the same specifications as 80 units being constructed for Canadian National. These 2000 h.p., four-motor (B-B) road-switchers, P&W 2001-2005, came with "safety cabs," a new feature that has since become common on new American and Canadian units. The M420R's also introduced a new color scheme, a mostly orange body accented by a large white parallelogram on the hood and yellow frame stripes.

The M420R's were delivered in 1974 and 1975, and the RS3's were returned to D&H. MLW, however, did not attract any more

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American customers, and until their expected 1994 retirement (2002 and 2004 were still in use in March), they remained the only Montreal units built new for a U.S. railroad.

Providence & Worcester also was early to the party of reduced crew size. At a time when union work-rules forced larger railroads to staff freight trains with four, five, or even six employees, P&W utilized crews of three: an engineer, conductor, and brakeman. "We trained all of our people," recalls P&W President Orville R. Harrold. Each employee was qualified to serve as either engineer or conductor, so assignments were rotated. Today, two- and three-person crews are the norm on P&W and most other railroads as well. Except for the brief period of Teamsters involvement, the United Transportation Union (UTU) has represented P&W train-crew members throughout the railroad's independent existence.

Profiting from the PC wreckage

By the mid-1970's, bankrupt Penn Central had more important matters to be concerned with than its little skirmishes with the P&W. The federal government's solution to the Northeast rail problem—Conrail—occurred in 1976. Many PC lines were not included in Conrail, and P&W looked at some for possible expansion.

On April 1, 1976, the day Conrail began, P&W added 93 miles of former PC/New Haven trackage, acquiring outright four lines, the "Norwich & Worcester" between Worcester and Plainfield, Conn. (42.8 miles) and three branches: Plainfield-Versailles, Conn. (9.6); Webster-Southbridge, Mass. (11); and Cranston-Pontiac (4.7). P&W also officially took title to the active portions of the Slatersville and Wrentham branches, and became designated operator of two sections of state-owned trackage: Versailles-Willimantic, Conn. (13.6 miles), and East Providence-Bristol, R.I. (12).

Where PC had lost money, P&W operated each of these lines profitably. Further, it plowed revenues back into physical-plant improvements, reversing years of deferred maintenance. P&W also took advantage of federal and state funding to assist in this work. P&W began a policy of keeping its lines maintained for a maximum 40-mph freight speed, a practice it still follows.

Soon, government and business turned to P&W to operate more trackage. At the State of Connecticut's urging in 1980, the U.S. Department of Transportation ordered P&W to acquire from Conrail the remainder of the 28-mile Norwich & Worcester

between Plainfield and the Amtrak junction at Groton, plus a 3-mile branch south of Amtrak into Groton proper. This trackage has several big customers, and DOT's willingness to award it to P&W in the face of objection from Conrail said a lot about the small system's growing credibility. One reason: P&W has been very visible in the area's centers of government, and P&W officials regularly attend legislative and agency sessions pertaining to transportation issues.

P&W also acquired two tiny Rhode Island carriers in the early 1980's: the 0.9-mile Warwick Railway, essentially a spur off Amtrak's Northeast Corridor in Cranston; and the 2-mile Moshassuck Valley, between Pawtucket and Saylesville, just north of Providence. Both lines were worked by local freights based at Valley Falls. (Warwick Railway may be familiar from "WRWK" reporting marks on some P&W boxcars and gondolas. P&W also uses "PW" marks.)

The 1980's marked the beginning of American railroad deregulation, and many large systems began to abandon and sell marginal lines. Much of Conrail's former New Haven branchline network long had been unprofitable, and in 1982, P&W picked up all Conrail services remaining in Rhode Island. These included the Providence-Coventry "Washington Secondary" (16 miles), the Rhode Island portion of CR's ex-NH East Junction industrial track in East Providence (3), and the branch from Newport, R.I., to the Massachusetts state line near Fall River (16.2). P&W was granted trackage rights over Conrail lines in Massachusetts to reach the latter, but instead chose to contract with Conrail to handle the occasional traffic there. The state of Rhode Island now owns this line, and it is out of service.

P&W also became operator of the 3-mile Harbor Junction industrial track, a city-owned line connecting the Amtrak main at Cranston with the busy Port of Providence

harbor district. Further, P&W acquired trackage rights over 87 miles of Amtrak's Northeast Corridor to handle former Conrail freight customers from the Massachusetts-Rhode Island state line to Westbrook, Conn.

P&W also filled a couple of small but strategic gaps in its route map in 1983 when it bought the 3 miles of B&M trackage that connected the Gardner branch with the rest of the P&W system in Worcester, plus 1 mile of it at Gardner. Interestingly, this purchase required P&W to give up its stock in the Vermont & Massachusetts, a 19th century company that officially owned a portion of B&M's main line between Fitchburg and Greenfield, Mass. With the small acquisition, Providence & Worcester had full control of its through routes from Gardner to Providence and Groton. Also during the mid-1980's, P&W briefly handled switching for Boston & Maine on 18 miles of trackage from Worcester north to Lancaster.

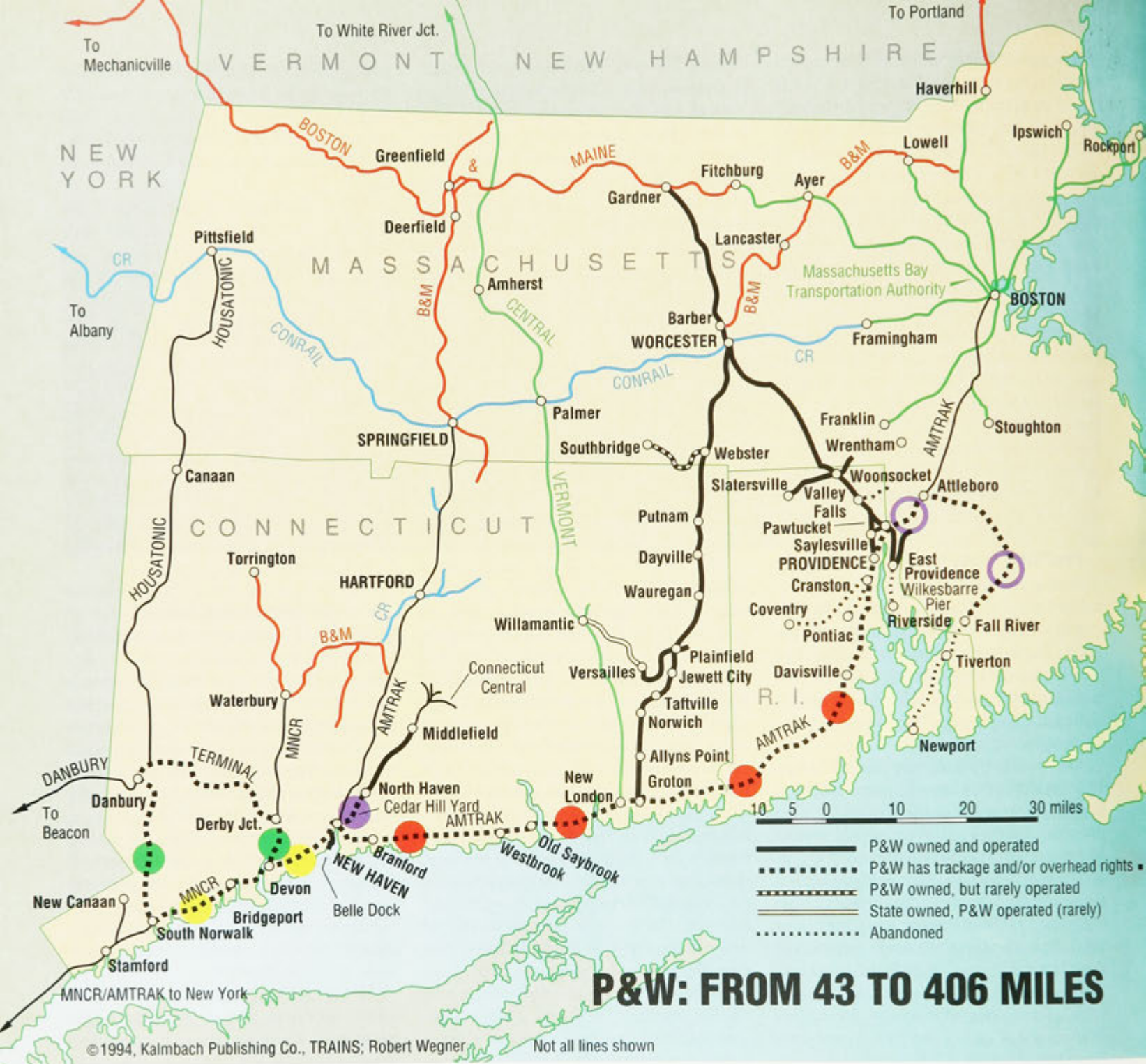
Interest from Conrail

Most of Providence & Worcester's expansion has been possible because of Conrail's eagerness to shed marginal services. But even as P&W was growing, in 1989 Conrail expressed interest in acquiring the entire P&W! Harrold recalls that his company was willing to entertain any serious proposals from Conrail, which was especially interested in P&W's deepwater port site in East Providence. With tracks leading right to the water, P&W's Wilkesbarre Pier seemed to offer a better ship-to-rail intermodal site than Conrail had available in Boston. Conrail made brief mention of its actions in a quarterly report to stockholders, but never made an acquisition offer.

In 1991 P&W expanded again, moving farther west in picking up Conrail's freight rights over 31 miles of Amtrak's main line between Westbrook and New Haven. P&W



A P&W Tilcon traprock train makes a pretty sight under Metro-North catenary at West Haven, Conn., at sunset on June 16, 1993.



©1994, Kalmbach Publishing Co., TRAINS; Robert Wegner Not all lines shown

also purchased CR's Belle Dock industrial track in the city of New Haven. A Conrail interchange was added at CR's large Cedar Hill Yard in North Haven.

P&W's most recent expansion occurred in March 1993 when it added 104 route-miles, although it owns only 10 of them. Purchased was a short segment of Conrail's line between North Haven and Middlefield, but included in the deal were 3 miles of trackage rights between North Haven and New Haven, as well



as on Metro-North's portion of the Northeast Corridor between New Haven and South Norwalk (31.2), Devon and Derby Junction (8.3), and South Norwalk and Danbury (23.8). P&W also got rights on Danbury Terminal between Derby Junction and Danbury (27.9 miles); this is the easterly portion of the former New Haven Maybrook Line.

Overhead rights on Conrail, Metro-North, and Danbury Terminal permit P&W to move trains of aggregate to an asphalt plant at Danbury. The only new customers for P&W were two small shippers on Metro-North's Danbury Branch. P&W also is responsible for freight on the Devon-Derby Junction segment, although there are no rail customers on it at the moment. Conrail

continues to serve customers between New Haven and South Norwalk, and of course Housatonic switches customers on the DT.

A more recent P&W expansion effort did not come to pass. In October 1993, CN North America told of its intent to sell its 325-mile Central Vermont Railway. P&W was one of several bidders, offering \$20.6 million in P&W stock and job-protection payments for displaced CV workers, but P&W was not among the four finalists CNNA announced in late February 1994.

P&W's two decades of growth have not been without losses. Several lines have proven to be money-losers, and P&W has abandoned them: Cranston-Pontiac; Providence-Washington; Tiverton-Newport; the Wrentham branch spur; the state-owned

At a glance . . .

Name: Providence & Worcester Railroad.

Headquarters address: 75 Hammond St., P.O. Box 16551, Worcester, MA 01601. (508) 755-4000.

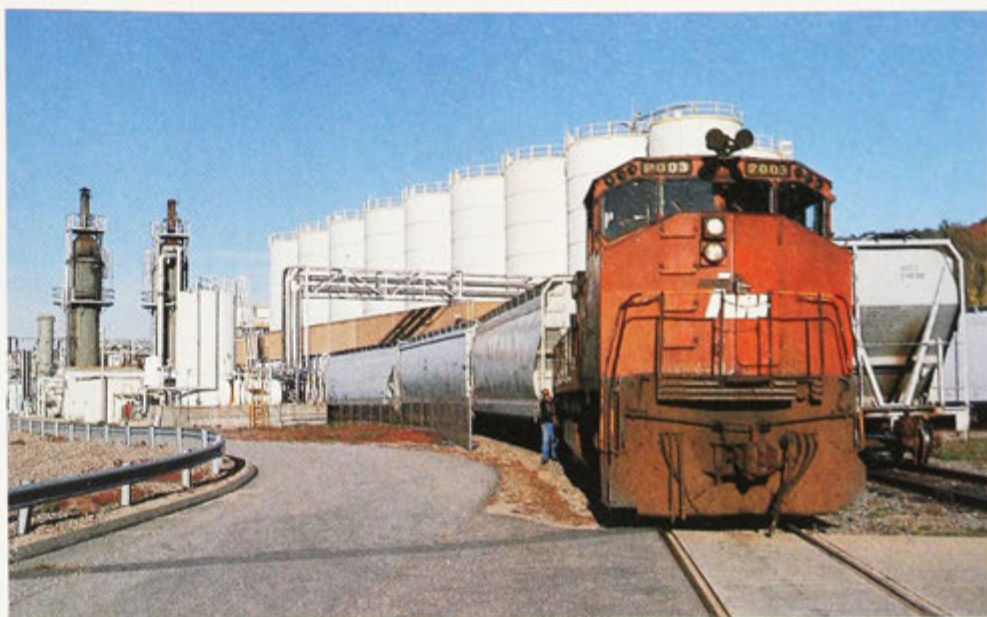
SIG: New Haven Railroad Historical & Technical Association, P.O. Box 122, Wallingford, CT 06492.

Radio Frequencies: P&W Ch. 1, 160.650 AAR 36 (road and dispatcher); Ch. 2, 161.100 AAR 66 (yard); Ch. 3, 160.890 AAR 52; Conrail Ch. 2, 161.070 AAR 64; Metro-North Ch. 3, 160.545 AAR 29; Amtrak road, 160.920, AAR 54; Housatonic, 160.395 AAR 19.

Top track speed: 40 mph; 30 daylight, 50 night allowed on Amtrak Northeast Corridor.

Daily average train frequency: Two road trains per day on the two Worcester routes, plus daily locals elsewhere.

Major traffic: Chemicals, plastics, paper products, food materials, traprock, intermodal.



ger trains at speeds of up to 150 mph. P&W is concerned about attempting to mix its freights with this faster operation, and is studying the situation.

Although P&W believes that the high-speed passenger project is commendable, "no one [involved in it] is thinking about freight service or industrial development," says Ronald D. Klein, P&W's director of sales and marketing. The best solution is a dedicated freight track alongside the passenger tracks, he says. In some places, a third track already exists, although much of it is in poor condition. Klein suggests that the federal government should be responsible for the funding that will become necessary because of the Amtrak upgrading.

As with many other sizeable railroads, a holding company called Capital Properties, Inc., owned P&W for much of its recent history. CPI owned all shares of Providence & Worcester Railroad until 1988, when the railroad became independent again. Under a recapitalization plan, all railroad shares were distributed to Capital Properties stockholders. CP itself owns real estate at several locations, including downtown Providence, and had a petroleum storage facility in East Providence. Robert Eder, the original leader of P&W's move for independence, owns about 51 percent each of Capital Properties and P&W Railroad. He serves as chairman of the railroad. Providence & Worcester stock is traded over the counter, listed by the National Association of Securities Dealers.

Orville Harrold, 61, has been P&W president since 1980. He has been with the railroad since its 1973 independence, starting as its first chief engineer. A native of Brooklyn, N.Y., and a Marine veteran, he worked for Westinghouse Air Brake Company before joining the Pennsylvania Railroad in 1960. He was assistant regional mechanical superintendent for Penn Central's Metropolitan

On October 11, 1993, train NR-3 worked the Dow Chemical plant at Allyns Point, Conn. M420R 2003 was in its last autumn on P&W.

Region in New York in 1972 when he met Eder. When P&W broke away from PC the following year, Harrold went with the new firm. He became general manager in 1975, and succeeded Eder as president in 1980.

Providence & Worcester has 133 employees, 98 represented by three unions: UTU, Brotherhood of Railway Signalmen, and the Transportation Communications Union. The company has a deferred profit-sharing plan for its unionized employees, based on contributions in years when P&W has income from railroad operations.

Worcester is the hub

Worcester (Wooss-ter) has always been P&W's operations hub. The locomotive shop and only large yard are in South Worcester beside the Worcester-Providence main. From the upper end of the yard, the Norwich & Worcester line heads south toward Groton, and tracks at the south end connecting the two routes form a large wye.

The old New Haven Railroad crew room serves as P&W's dispatcher offices. In 1989, P&W bought a brick factory building between the N&W tracks and Conrail's Boston Line that overlooks the yard. P&W renovated the building for corporate headquarters.

Since 90 percent of P&W's interchange is with Conrail, most P&W freight business passes through Worcester, although there is some CR interchange at Cedar Hill, Conn. About 6 percent of P&W interchange is with Guilford Transportation Industries' Boston & Maine at Gardner, and 4 percent with Central Vermont at New London. For several years, Conrail ran a dedicated pair of trains, symbolized SEPW and PWSE, between its big yard at Selkirk, N.Y., near Albany, and



East Providence-Bristol line; and much of the former Moshassuck Valley. Trackage between Webster and Southbridge, Mass., and the Connecticut-owned Versailles-Wilimantic branch are not officially out of service but are rarely used. And although P&W has rights over Amtrak to New Haven, a large segment in western Rhode Island and eastern Connecticut rarely sees freight trains.

The passenger problem

As freight-service provider on most of the Boston-New Haven portion of the Northeast Corridor, Providence & Worcester will be affected by Amtrak's high-speed electrification project now under way there. Overhead catenary will restrict freight-car height, and Amtrak plans to operate passen-



As Conrail train TV-6 thunders by overhead, P&W 1702, its only GP9, returns from CR's East Worcester Yard with container cars.

ed bridge, which the railroad shares with busy U.S. Route 1.

The other daytime crew makes the run up the Middlefield line to bring out trainloads of stone from the Reeds Gap quarry. Some traprock is for use as ballast by Metro-North, and P&W will deliver these cars in New Haven or South Norwalk. A night job using Metro-North and Danbury Terminal rights moves stone to Tilcon's asphalt plant at Danbury. This train usually operates via Devon and Derby Junction, although P&W also has rights to reach Danbury via South Norwalk. When needed, this crew switches customers on MNCR's South Norwalk-Danbury line.

The Middlefield line is interesting because three freight railroads use the same trackage. Conrail retained ownership of the southern portion to serve two big customers north of Cedar Hill Yard. P&W trains need to use this segment to reach their own portion of the line, and CR also has rights over P&W to pick up hoppers of ballast from Reeds Gap for its own use. The third carrier is short line Connecticut Central, operator of 20 miles of ex-New Haven branches in the Middletown area, which interchanges with P&W at Middlefield and runs over P&W and Conrail rights to swap cars with CR at Cedar Hill.

A customer mix

New England has suffered from a loss of rail freight in general over the past decades, but Providence & Worcester retains a nucleus of big customers whose products represent a mix. The biggest ones receive or ship chemicals, plastics, paper products, food materials, and minerals. Major chemical consignees include Dow at Allyn's Point, Pfizer in Groton, George Mann at the Port of Providence, and Getty Oil at East Providence. Plastic products are received by Nymman Manufacturing at East Providence, Hasbro Industries at Central Falls, R.I., and Toray Plastics at Davisville. Mid-States Packaging in Worcester receives plastic pellets by rail for distribution throughout New England.

Paper customers include International Paper at Putnam, Federal Paperboard at Versailles, R.R. Donnelly at Old Saybrook, and the *Providence Journal* newspaper at Providence. Coffax receives vegetable oil at Pawtucket. Tilcon is P&W's primary mineral customer, operating five on-line quarries and processing plants, and Anchor Glass receives materials at Dayville, Conn.

Intermodal freight normally is associat-

Worcester, but P&W traffic currently moves in CR's Boston freights.

P&W has two symbol road freight of its own which make turns into Worcester and back: NRWO/WONR from Plainfield and PRWO/WOPR from Valley Falls. They run Sunday through Thursday nights. Two weekday crews and a regular Sunday extra crew work the Worcester yard and at P&W's two local intermodal facilities. With B&M interchange down, service on the Gardner line is handled by a Worcester switcher or one of the road freights.

Two weekday locals run out of Valley Falls during the day, utilizing the road freight's locomotives. One mostly covers the East Providence branch and its many industries, while the other handles Providence, plus customers on the Northeast Corridor. This job also interchanges with Seaview Transportation Company at Davisville. Seaview provides contract switching service over 23 track-miles inside the former Quonset Point naval base, now the Rhode Island Department of Economic Development's Quonset-Davisville Industrial Park. P&W exchanges 800-plus cars a year with Seaview.

Train WONR's road power is broken up to operate two weekday locals out of Plainfield. One works the Norwich & Worcester line north to Putnam and then goes south to serve the large Dow Chemical plant at Allyn's Point. The other covers the Amtrak main line as far west as Old Saybrook, and P&W's Old Main branch in

Groton, to serve Pfizer Pharmaceuticals and General Dynamics' Electric Boat Division (builder of U.S. Navy nuclear submarines).

Probably the most scenic portion of the P&W is the N&W line between Jewett City and Groton, which runs alongside the Quinebaug and Thames Rivers, through a tunnel at Taftville, and through the U.S. Navy Submarine Base at Groton. The Plainfield-Versailles branch is handled by one of the locals or the night freight.

West of Old Saybrook, much of P&W's business depends on the operation of Tilcon Connecticut, a large traprock producer. P&W serves Tilcon quarries at Wauregan (Plainfield), Pin Orchard (Branford), and Reeds Gap (Middlefield), and processing plants at Old Saybrook and Danbury. Traprock work is seasonal, with business increasing in the warmer months.

Except in winter, when two jobs are typical, P&W usually runs three weekday trains out of New Haven. The crews are based, and trains made up, on P&W's Belle Dock branch trackage. One daytime train covers the Amtrak Shore Line east to Old Saybrook, connecting with the train out of Plainfield, and picking up traprock at Tilcon's Pine Orchard quarry. Because P&W shares this busy two-track line with Amtrak expresses and Connecticut DOT's Shore Line East commuter runs, this train often operates "pull-pull" (with a locomotive at either end) to expedite switching moves. This job will also deliver cars to New Haven Terminal, which operates in the Port of New Haven at the end of the Belle Dock branch. P&W sometimes uses a rubber-tired Trackmobile, painted in the road's brown and orange locomotive scheme, to move cars on this tight trackage and over a weight-restrict-





New England pastoral: GE's 2204 and 2201 lead CT-1 past a venerable stone house in East Wallingford, Conn., on October 25, 1993.

ed with large railroads, where long high-speed hauls can make carrying containers and trailers competitive with highway transportation. But P&W has proved that a smaller railroad can make money in the intermodal business too, and its container service is a big producer of revenue.

The two intermodal yards in Worcester are operated by Intransit Container, Inc. Greenwood Yard, owned by ICI, is about 2 miles southeast of P&W's main yard on the Providence line. At Southbridge Street Yard, adjacent to P&W's shops, ICI leases eight

acres of P&W property. Both are U.S. Customs bonded; no container can leave or be unloaded without first being cleared by customs agents. Most containers carry consumer goods from the Far East. They are received on double-stack cars from Conrail, after transcontinental trips originating at West Coast ports. Following a very modest start in 1987, when P&W moved just 600 containers, the road handled more than 47,000 in 1992, and the railroad was awarded *Modern Railroads* magazine's 1989 "Golden Freight Car" award for excellence

in railroad marketing for developing its container business.

Continued intermodal growth seems likely, and additional property is available next to Greenwood Yard if needed. P&W had been concerned about a state-funded project to make the Port of Boston a major intermodal center ("Massachusetts Sees Stacks in its Future," September 1993 TRAINS). The initial \$158 million pricetag to improve clearances on Conrail, Guilford's Boston & Maine, Central Vermont, and P&W had risen to \$200 million, and although Klein had been worried that his company's privately established container route might be harmed by Guilford and its new intermodal partner CP Rail running on a taxpayer-supported line, the bonding issue died in committee early this year.

Promise for a port

A project that could provide more opportunities is Wilkesbarre Pier in East Providence, a potential deepwater port on Narragansett Bay owned by the railroad. Since 1976, P&W has been working on the development of a major rail/ship facility there. An essential part of the plan is the reclamation and filling of 45 acres of tidal land, and delays in receiving necessary permits, plus a lawsuit by the city of East Providence, have slowed the project. Issues with the city have

Providence & Worcester locomotives

No.	Builder	Model	Year	Remarks
8	GE	45-ton	1950	Moshassuck Valley; sold to W.R. Jones, Short-Rail Enterprises (N.C.)
9	GE	65-ton	1943	Moshassuck Valley; sold to Pennsylvania Power & Light
51	EMD	Power car	1954	Head-end power car, with Caterpillar engine/gen. 275 kw system; ex-Amtrak power car 668, ex-1918; ex-E9B 456, <i>nee</i> Union Pacific 952B; A1A-A1A.
104	Atlas	50-ton	1940	Warwick Railway, side-rod unit; ex-U.S. Navy; scrapped
150	GE	25-ton	1945	Ex-New Haven Terminal, acquired 1992; being rebuilt by P&W; 4-wheel
161-165	Alco	RS3	1952	Delaware & Hudson 4071, 4075, 4078, 4082, 4084; leased 1973-75
1201-1202	EMD	SW7	1950	Ex-Conrail, Penn Central, New York Central 8845, 8851; purchased 1991
1501	Alco	RS2	1949	Ex-Maine Central 553, purchased 1977; scrapped 1982
1601-1602	Alco	RS3	1951	Ex-Southern 2132, 2141; purchased 1976, sold to Lamoille Valley 1982
1701-1702	EMD	GP9	1957	Ex-Conrail, Penn Central, Pennsylvania 7189, 7205; purchased from EMD 1982; 1701 sold to Quaboag Transfer (Palmer, Mass.) 1984
1801	GE	U188	1976	Acquired new
2001-2002	MLW	M420R	1974	Acquired new; retired 1994
2003-2005	MLW	M420R	1975	Acquired new; retired 1994
2006-2008	EMD	GP38-2	1980	Acquired new
2009	EMD	GP38-2	1982	Acquired new
2010-2011	EMD	GP38	1969	Ex-Conrail, PC 7794, 7808; acquired from Helm 1984
2201	GE	B23-7	1978	Acquired new
2202-2208	GE	U238	1977	Ex-Conrail 2792, '98, '95, '90, '97, '96, '94; purchased 1993 (3), 1994 (4)

Notes: Unless noted, all B-B wheel arrangement. Source: R.E. Baumuller, P&W; effective March 1, 1994.—Scott Hartley.



P&W must use a caboose on its Northeast Corridor trains, and this ex-NYC car was assisting at Old Saybrook in October 1993.

been resolved, and the area now is zoned as a port district.

P&W's hopes for a partner have not been realized, though, so development has been gradual. A 135x1900-foot ship berth area was dredged to 40 feet in 1991 and 1992. A large berm has been constructed, and the 45-acre reclamation area is being filled.

P&W seems most interested in developing Wilkesbarre with other investors or users, but the railroad plans to complete the project alone if necessary, according to Harrold. Providence is the only deepwater port between New Jersey and Nova Scotia with "on-dock" rail service and direct access to the double-stack network, Harrold says. And Providence is a day's less sailing time from Europe than is New Jersey.

Toward some traffic at Wilkesbarre, P&W is getting its railroad ready to handle anticipated traffic growth. In early 1992, 18 structures on the Worcester-Providence line needed to be raised (or tracks lowered under them) to accommodate containers stacked 18 feet from the rail, and about one-third of these locations have been modified. P&W would likely rely on Conrail at Worcester for interchange of double-stack traffic.

Like some of its larger railroad counterparts, Providence & Worcester keeps a corporate business train. The company began to assemble its fleet in 1979 when it acquired an ex-Northern Pacific round-end observation car. P&W named it *New Englander* and soon purchased several ex-Amtrak coaches to accompany it.

Today the train includes the *New Englander*, coaches *Massachusetts* and *Rhode Island*, and dining car *Connecticut*. P&W was an early user of head-end power to heat, cool, and light its cars. For this duty, the road has ade-

powered former Amtrak E9B unit that carries an engine/generator set.

P&W's locomotive roster has always been compact and varied, with a mix of modern and vintage units. The return of the D&H RS3's upon delivery of the five M420R's was not the end of American-built Alcos on the road. In anticipation of acquiring its first Connecticut trackage in 1976, P&W bought two RS3's from Southern Railway. They were repainted in orange and chocolate in a design following their SR lines. A retired Maine Central RS2 acquired as a parts supply was found to be serviceable, so it was used for a while in yard and work-train service before being cannibalized.

As P&W grew, it acquired more new locomotives. General Electric provided the next two, one U18B and one B23-7, both of which were delivered with the orange and white parallelogram. P&W finally turned to General Motors in 1980, and over the following three years bought four brand-new GP38-2's. All but the last example were equipped with dynamic braking.

Since 1982, though, all of P&W's locomotive purchases have been of secondhanders. The first were two former Conrail GP9's, which allowed the retirement of the RS3's. The Geeps introduced the first version of P&W's current color scheme, a brown upper carbody and an orange lower half, separated by a narrow white stripe. Two ex-Conrail GP38's were acquired from Helm Leasing in 1984, and two SW7's were picked up directly from Conrail in 1991. Originally intended for the light-rail branches in the New Haven area, the SW7's instead have spent most of their time working Worcester-area assignments. A tiny GE 25-tonner is being rebuilt by P&W to replace the Trackmobile assigned to New Haven. To handle the 1993 expansion, P&W bought three GE U23B's from Conrail, and in early 1994 acquired four more Conrail "U-Boats" to replace the M420R's.

Most of P&W's fleet has the cab sig-

nal/automatic-train-stop equipment mandated on Amtrak, so just about any unit can be seen on any assignment. The Middlefield line and the trackage-rights route to Danbury over Danbury Terminal have some relatively steep grades, so P&W prefers to assign New Haven-based trains units with dynamic braking, such as the B23-7, the U23B's, and GP38-2's 2006-2008, says R.E. Baumuller, chief mechanical officer.

P&W locomotives and passenger and freight cars all are maintained at South Worcester, where the original two-stall enginehouse was substantially enlarged and modernized during the 1980's. Maintenance equipment and highway vehicles are cared for at a new facility in Plainfield.

Staying afloat in a tough area

Providence & Worcester has managed to be successful in a region where railroading is a difficult business. Unlike many other railroads that can show profits only by selling off assets, P&W's railroad has usually operated in the black, Harrold emphasizes. The company has weathered the recent recession which continues to hold New England in its grip.

In his report to shareholders for the 1992 business year, Harrold reported that the company's operating revenues exceeded operating expenses by a greater amount than at any time in the previous decade. More than 96 percent of Providence & Worcester's 1993 total revenues came from freight and other operating income (the other 4 percent is largely the result of rental of utility easements). Even with the region's sluggish economy, P&W showed a net income of \$1.1 million in 1993. Having shed some unprofitable lines and expanded in more encouraging areas, P&W looks to a secure future. Conventional freight carloadings increased for the third year in a row, to 26,500 for 1993. And intermodal growth could be substantial.

Where does Providence & Worcester go from here? Unlike some of today's successful shortline firms, P&W has no interest in acquiring more lines in other locales. "Our philosophy is that we will expand only if a new line is contiguous," Harrold says. With that rule in mind, there still are lines in the region belonging to Conrail and other companies where P&W's style of railroading could work successfully. **I**

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