

GIRL FEELS THRILL OF MILE-A-MINUTE RACE ON TRIP IN CAB OF WORLD'S FASTEST TRAIN

Roaring Ride of 55 1/2 Miles in 50 Minutes on Engine of "Boardwalk Flier" Proves Exhilarating Example of Steam's Whizzing Conquest of Space and Laggard Minutes

VETERAN OF RAILS HOLDS FIRMLY TO THROTTLE WHILE LANDSCAPE IS A MERE BLUR

Grimy Face and Wind-Swept Tresses Compensated For When Journey to Atlantic City Is Completed Ahead of Time—"All in a Day's Work" Is Nonchalant Attitude of Trainmen

By SALLY LOCKWOOD

NINETY miles an hour!
Hanging out the window of a locomotive cab, where no other woman had ever ridden!

A rush of wind and dust that turned to grime in the stinging pelt of rain!
Clamoring bell; shriek of the whistle; roaring of steam; hot blasts from the firebox with, over all, a glorious feeling of flying on and on through damp, cool space, with no thought of anything but that.

And, at the end of fifty minutes, a queerly shaded bluish-gray face that meant no complexion at all till scrubbing brushes had scrubbed their hardest.

These were some of the sensations of my first ride in the engine cab of the "Boardwalk Flier"—a marvelous experience if you care nothing for personal appearance or complexion.

In fact, by the time you are going ninety miles an hour you are so exhilarated that hairpins and cold cream mean nothing in your life—you just want to keep on moving like that forever.

At least, I was mighty sorry that the "fastest regularly scheduled passenger train in the world" didn't go ninety miles an hour the entire fifty-five miles from Camden to Atlantic City, instead of just across those flying miles of perfectly straight roadbed that lie on the outskirts.

Strange, isn't it, that the passengers can sit so calmly, back in the coaches, reading their papers or powdering their noses, without getting a single thrill over the speed the train is making? They would only grumble if the Boardwalk Flier pulled in a minute late at Atlantic City.

Seconds Are Precious in Watches Race On

I never before realized the tremendous importance of seconds. They had been merely trivial divisions of minutes that never bothered me. But when we went a mile in forty seconds and the entire fifty-five miles in a trifle more than fifty minutes; when I saw the engineer and the road foreman of engines and the supervisor of fuel consumption, watches in hand, counting up the seconds our journey had consumed, I doubted as contentedly as they, and felt that to get into Atlantic City even seconds before schedule time meant much.

When my trip in the cab was being planned scores came forth with suggestions.

"Wear knickers and old clothes and you'll need goggles," said Reading Railway officials.

"Wear a bathing cap to protect your hair," said some one else.

"Be sure to cover your face with cold cream before you start" and "hold on tight, the cab rocks like everything and you won't have a spring seat. I hope you don't get seasick," and "don't talk to the engineer."

A minute after we started I was reading over the last injunction. The engineer hung out his window at the right of the cab. I hung out of the fireman's window at the other side.

With the constant ringing of our train bell, the intermittent shrieks of our whistle, the clanging of fire doors and the fireman's shovel, the roar of the steam and the sweep of wind and drizzle against our faces, if I had shouted at the top of my lungs I think the engineer probably would not even have heard me unless he had been listening for my voice.

As much as William Daltzner, road foreman of engines, who served as my guide, had explained to me the duties of an engineer, I really had not expected any attention from William Robert Hammill, driver of the Boardwalk Flier.

Besides keeping his hand on the throttle it was up to him to glimpse all high-way and railroad crossings and blow the whistle at such places; to note the telegraph and automatic signals that told him whether the track was clear; to watch the water level in the boiler; to keep an eye on the steam gauge, to keep the valve if the steam pressure became too great; and to watch the air gauge that showed whether the pressure was kept up sufficiently to operate the wheels.

Pugny of Man Is Boss of Enormous Iron Steed

W. B. Lewis, superintendent of the Reading Seashore Lines, had taken me to the Camden train sheds early to examine the workings of the Boardwalk Flier's locomotive, and it was there that I met Hammill.

He was oiling the engine and even

did but that the next home signal will be at "stop." And when the red shows above yellow it means that another train is on this block and also indicates stop.

The engineer knows these signals so thoroughly that his eyes catch the colors mechanically as his locomotive whizzes by, and his fingers grasp the levers that increase or decrease his speed accordingly.

Ahead of the Schedule Despite One Slowdown

Only once in our run did we have a signal to slow down. That was at the bridge just this side of Atlantic City, where repair work under way made caution necessary.

After the previous speed it seemed we scarcely moved across the bridge and only crawled into the station. But we were ahead of schedule by several seconds.

The greatest speed was made between Blue Anchor and Cologne—seventeen miles of perfectly straight, clear roadbed where the ferns by the wayside seemed merely a carpet and the trees one long mass of green broken only now and then by a patch of color that was house or barn or station.

"Did you like it?" the engineer asked. "The queer came from half a dozen trainmen. When the swift journey was ended 'Bob' Hammill smiled beneath his sandy mustache and asked me to ride again."

He was as calm and detached as though he had just come from the corner grocery store instead of from the engineer's box of the fastest train in the world.

"No, I've never been afraid of anything in my life," he answered, and smiled at the question. "When my mother died at fifty-eight she had never been frightened in her life."

He wasn't boasting. He simply doesn't know what fear is. His nerves have been trained and hardened by forty-five years of railroad service. Thirty-three of these years he has been an engineer, most of the time driving the fastest trains on the road.

Many men after years of preliminary training fail to pass the final test that puts them into the fast drivers' class. Many others refuse to run fast trains. They want their hands on the throttle of only freight trains.

There are still others who stand the strain of the speedsters for a few years then completely lose their nerve and go back to firing, or else to the throttle of slow-moving locomotives.

Speeding Engine Is Pet of Veteran Engineer

But "Bob" Hammill, who will be sixty-four years old in October, only smiles his calm smile, puts Engine 121 much as a weaned colt might stroke the biggest circus elephant with which he has made friends, and admits: "The faster they are the better I like them."

In his forty-five years with the rail-

can against accidents. Only recently in a heavy rain we had to slow down on our way to Atlantic City. I think it was near Winslow Junction.

"Driving against a heavy rain, the water poured across the boiler in sheets and streamed down our faces. It was almost impossible to keep our eyes clear, but we just had to slow down, and that meant holding up all the other trains along the line behind us."

"Every engineer hates to do that, and he hates to pull into a station off schedule. On the other hand, he is always blamed if anything goes wrong, so he tries to be careful."

There was still plenty of time before he would need to go over the engine with his oil can to see that it was fit for the return journey. Except on special occasions, when there is need for an extra man, Hammill makes only this one round trip a day to Atlantic City. Now he leaned against the rear wheel of his locomotive, gloves off, oilcloth cap pushed back and relaxed. He was in the humor for reminiscences.

Plenty of Room Open for Crack Engineers

He was born in Ireland, he said, but his parents brought him to America when he was an infant.

"When I was a lad," he went on, "my mother told me I must either go to school or to the iron works. I wasn't much for books, so I chose the iron works. Then in 1877 I started work with the railroad as water boy for a section gang."

"It is a long, hard training to get into the engineer's box even now, and in those days there wasn't much pay, either. Now the pay is bigger because all the boys want to be conductors instead of engineers. Nobody seems to want the job and the railroads can't get men so easily."

"When my water-carrying job with the section gang ended I went into the railroad shops and later started firing. Thirty-three years ago I was given my first run and I have been driving engines ever since."

The Boardwalk Flier isn't the first train to go ninety or even more miles in an hour. But it is the fastest regularly scheduled train.

Only last year J. Lowber Stokes, a Philadelphia banker and broker, paid \$427 to have a special train carry him from Philadelphia to New York in eighty minutes. The thirty-five miles from Nesaminy Falls to Weston were covered in twenty-eight minutes, an average of one and a quarter miles a minute.

For the 3.0 miles between Westco and Round Brook Junction only two minutes were required, an average of 1.55 miles a minute. The ninety-mile run to Jersey City was made in eighty minutes. The previous record for that run was eighty-four minutes.

Even in 1905, trainmen say, there were many trains that made ninety miles an hour at times along their routes. In that year W. H. Newman,



Ready to go "mile a minute"



"Bob" Hammill oiling up for his trip on fastest train in world

president of the New York Central, ordered a wreck on a train from Mentor, O., to Chicago. However, he reversed this order when he found that speed had nothing to do with the accident and the Twentieth Century Limited continued its eighteen-hour schedule.

But there are still old trainmen who can tell of problems that confronted railroad experts of early Philadelphia days—problems that today engineers laugh at. Railroad managers poured over reports of experts and questioned each other as to the possibility of ever making engines burn coal, pull trains without setting them on fire, and take curves without the slipping of wheels.

When trains arrived at their destination the same day they set out, without the engineers having been arrested for poaching on the preserves of various legislative jurisdictions, and

without loss of life or limb, the townspeople turned out to marvel and applaud. When a cog slipped or a car was derailed, or an engine fell apart, it meant many deaths—and it wasn't an unusual occurrence.

The "Rocket," which is now on exhibition in the Columbia Avenue station of the Reading, was one of a group of engines which began to arrive in Philadelphia in the winter of 1837 and the spring of 1838—years before "Bob" Hammill's day. It weighed about eight tons, and during its life ran a total of 310,164 miles.

When 25 Miles an Hour Was "Real Whizzing"

It was considered one of the best locomotives of its day and could take a train along the road at a speed of twenty-five miles an hour. Running

it was a simple job compared to pulling the throttle of the Boardwalk Flier.

The wood used as fuel was on the platform beside the engine. The engineer and fireman on this primitive engine were one and the same man. There was plenty of time in those days, though, and it was not necessary to stop the train to fire the boiler. There was only one lever and that was the throttle.

"When it was away ahead you got full speed, and when it was pushed back you reversed. The engine had four wheels, no driving rods and no brakes. It had kerosene bull's eye and a pop whistle.

"Bob" Hammill rejoices that he doesn't have such an engine to drive. He has seen great development in locomotives even in his day. When the Boardwalk Flier was first put on he was selected as engineer, and he is mighty proud of the job.

Every afternoon soon after 3:30 o'clock, you can find him in the yards oiling and petting Engine 121, getting ready for the start to the shore.

He examines the gauges, tests the brakes, and takes up the slack on the throttle. Then he sits by the window waiting for the two pops on his whistle which are a signal to start.

When he gets them he braces himself, takes hold of the throttle with both hands and gives it the first notch. From the time the train starts it does not reduce its speed until it reaches the bridge this side of Atlantic City.

The locomotive is one of the newest types, a Pacific engine, with electric headlight and electric lights in the cab, with bell ringer and fire doors operated by its own electric generator. Compared with some of the other locomotives, it is low and heavy, built for power and speed.

"Some of the lighter engines can run just as fast," said Hammill, "but they couldn't pull the load this does. Now that passengers demand so much luxury on the train, parlor and club cars with every accommodation, it takes a heavy engine to pull the weight. And then the steel cars of today are much heavier

than the old wooden ones I started with."

Wants Sons to Follow in Dad's Footsteps

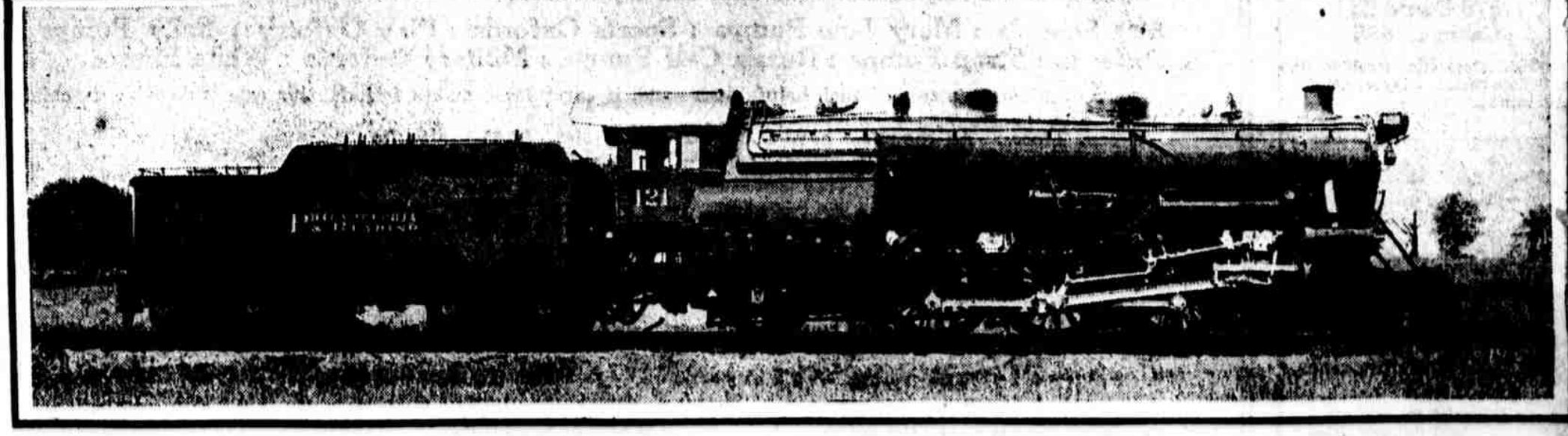
Hammill is now third oldest on the Reading's engineers' roster. He is hoping that one of his sons will some day follow in his footsteps. The boy is now making his start in the railroad shops.

"Bob" and his family have lived in the same house in Gloucester for more than fifty years. His parents lived there before him. Now there are his wife and four children. His wife, like those of hundreds of other engineers, accepts "Bob's" job and its hazards with a fortitude born of long schooling and knowledge of the work. In the early days it was harder, for his hours were longer and the risk greater.

Most of the train officials with whom I talked had served their day in railroad shops as firemen and engineers. They knew their engines as the geologists know his most precious specimen. They carried around pictures of their favorite locomotives. They could trace the evolution of the steam engine from queer little rattle up to the powerful and massive machines that are considered best today.

And the fascination for trains, with all the noise and bustle and gay-colored lights of the railroad yards, seemed to have spread to the wives, too. At least, those I met seemed to love and to know thoroughly the trainmen's lore. Many of them had ridden the engine beside their husbands or sweethearts at various times.

A group of trainmen and several women had stopped with me beside the Boardwalk Flier's locomotive to talk "trains and shops," and by the time Hammill had to begin his oiling task again there were many others standing near and staring in our direction.



The Reading's famous "121," which pulls the "fastest train in the world" to Atlantic City every day