



The Evolution of the Empire Service Timetable

Part I: The New York Central - By David Hamilton



A westbound New York Central freight passes Signal Station 2 in Solvay, New York, circa 1956. Donald French photo, collection of David Hamilton

Beneath the wheels of today's passenger trains that run across Amtrak's "Empire Corridor" lies the roadbed of the heart of the Water Level Route of the New York Central System, that extended from New York City to Buffalo. To plan a trip over this line, the modern passenger must simply consult the current edition of the Amtrak Empire Service Timetable. However, there was a time when the local train schedules on this route were found in a variety of divisional timetables. It was not until the World War II era that a local timetable that covered service across the state was available to travelers. The forerunner of the current Amtrak timetable first appeared on February 9, 1942, when New York Central Form 100 made its debut. This folder combined

EFFECTIVE FEBRUARY 9, 1942

New York Central System

Local Time Tables

Between

New York
Poughkeepsie
Albany
Schenectady
Utica
Syracuse
Rochester
Buffalo
Niagara Falls
and intermediate stations

also

Auburn Road Branch
Falls Road Branch
Niagara Falls Branch
Albany—Troy Belt Line
Dresden—Penn Yan Branch



FORM 100

EFFECTIVE NOVEMBER 19, 1944

New York Central System

Local Time Tables

Between

New York
Poughkeepsie
Albany
Schenectady
Utica
Syracuse
Rochester
Buffalo
Niagara Falls
and intermediate stations

also

Auburn Road Branch
Falls Road Branch
Niagara Falls Branch
Albany—Troy Belt Line
Dresden—Penn Yan Branch



FORM 100

EFFECTIVE SEPTEMBER 28, 1952

New York Central System

LOCAL TIME TABLES

New York
Poughkeepsie
Albany
Schenectady
Utica
Syracuse
Rochester
Buffalo
Niagara Falls
and intermediate stations

also

Auburn Road Branch
Falls Road Branch
Niagara Falls Branch
Albany—Troy
Dresden—Penn Yan Branch



FORM 100

the local timetables that were previously found in Hudson Division Form 126, Mohawk Division Form 127, and Syracuse, Rochester & Buffalo Division Form 130. Suburban trains remained in their own timetables, along with service on the Adirondack and St. Lawrence divisions, and the West Shore Railroad.

Tables for trains operating between New York's Grand Central Terminal, Albany, Buffalo, and Niagara Falls took up most of the schedule pages, with two panels devoted to service between Buffalo and Niagara Falls, the Falls Road & Auburn Road, the Penn Yan branch, and the Albany & Troy Belt Line.

It is not known whether this combined timetable was created for the convenience of passengers, or as a wartime effort to conserve resources. Shortly after the new form was implemented, the paper stock was switched to the low quality, newsprint style that was common during the war.

The title of the new Form 100 was simply "Local Time Tables," with major stations listed on the cover. A "NYC System" oval logo, with a small illustration of



From 1944 to 1949, the Form 100 timetable cover included artwork depicting the famous streamlined Hudson locomotive. Collection of David Hamilton

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EFFECTIVE APRIL 29, 1956

New York Central System

The Time shown herein is STANDARD TIME
add one hour for DAYLIGHT SAVING TIME

AREA TIME TABLE FOR

- New York
- Poughkeepsie
- Albany
- Schenectady
- Utica
- Syracuse
- Rochester
- Buffalo
- Niagara Falls

and intermediate stations
also

- Auburn Road Branch
- Falls Road Branch
- Niagara Falls Branch
- Albany—Troy

FORM 100

EFFECTIVE OCTOBER 28, 1956

NEW YORK CENTRAL

NEW YORK STATE AREA TIME TABLE

Travel-tailored
to meet your needs...

NEW YORK
POUGHKEEPSIE, ALBANY
SCHENECTADY, UTICA
SYRACUSE, ROCHESTER
BUFFALO
NIAGARA FALLS

FORM 100

EFFECTIVE APRIL 28, 1957

NEW YORK CENTRAL

NEW YORK STATE AREA TIME TABLE

NOW! N.Y. CENTRAL GOES ON LOCAL TIME

Arrivals and Departures are shown in LOCAL TIME. Daylight or Standard, whichever is in effect in each city.

NEW YORK
POUGHKEEPSIE, ALBANY
SCHENECTADY, UTICA
SYRACUSE, ROCHESTER
BUFFALO
NIAGARA FALLS

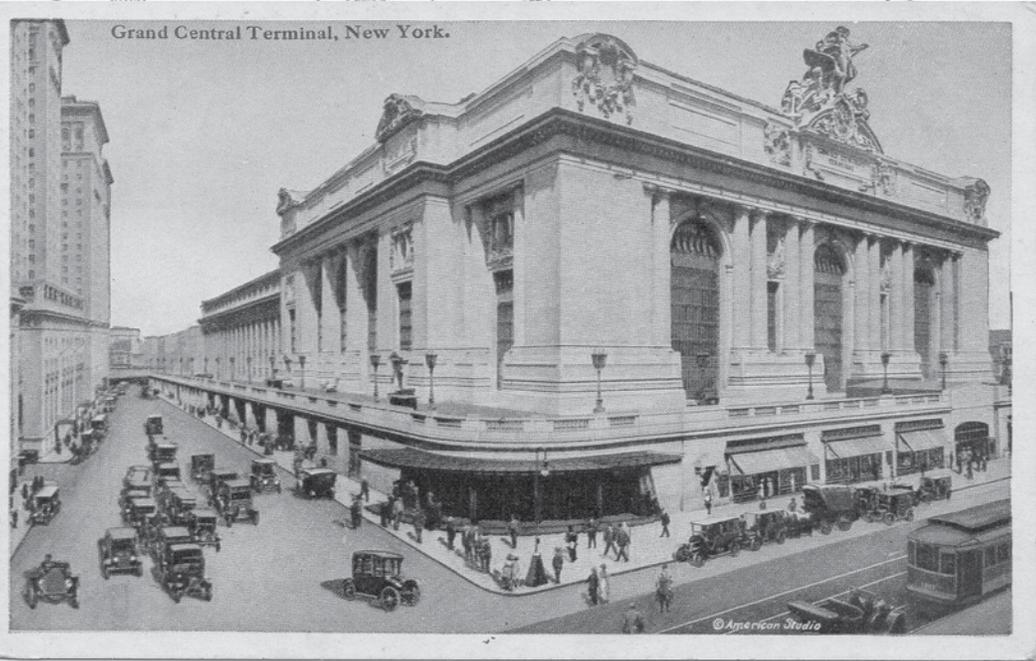
FORM 100

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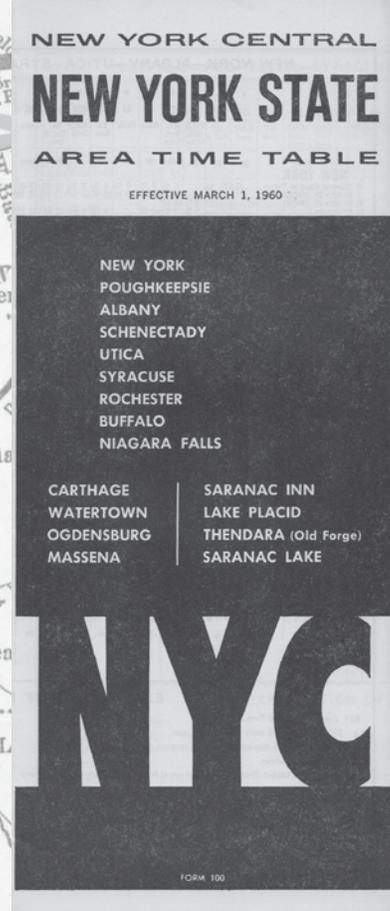
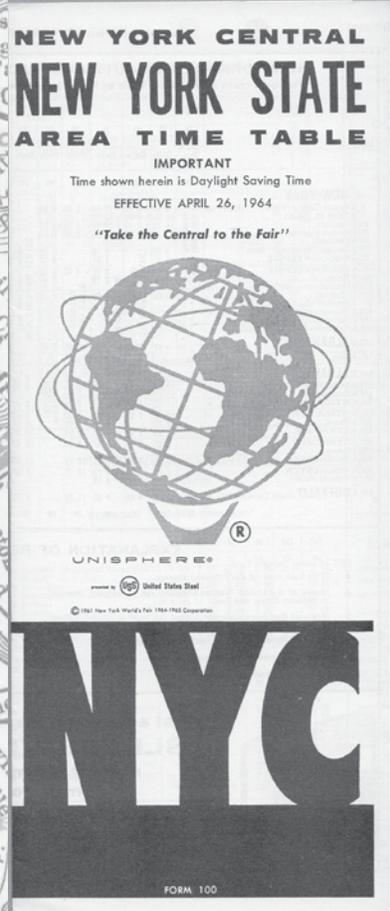
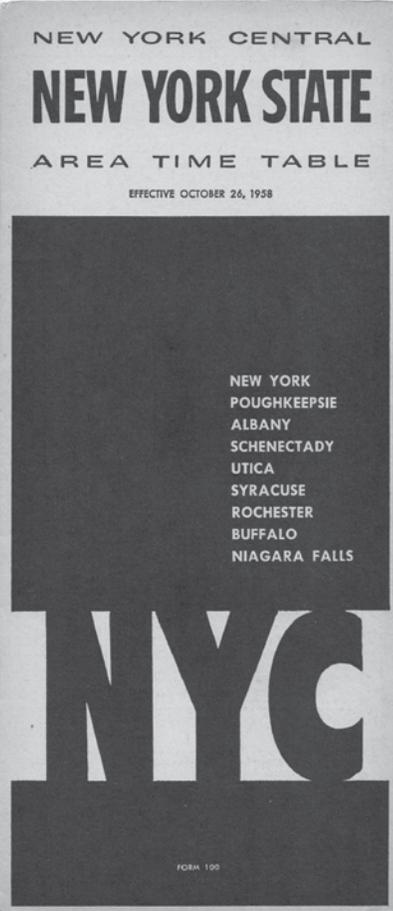
a steam locomotive, was the only artwork on an otherwise unremarkable cover. In June of 1944, this engine was replaced with a drawing of a streamlined Hudson, pulling the famed 20th Century Limited, which was later updated to a diesel F-unit in the April, 1950 edition.

Several cover changes took place during 1956 and 1957, first with the addition of the "modern" oval logo in April of 1956. The title of Form 100 was also changed from "Local Time Tables" to "Area Time Table" with this edition. On October 28, 1956, the title was again changed to the "New York State Area Timetable," with an advertising slogan of "Travel Tailored" taking up much of the cover.

This artwork only lasted for one issue, being replaced by "Now! NY Central Goes On Local Time" on the cover of the



The eastern terminus of the New York Central's passenger service across New York was Grand Central Terminal in New York City. Postcard from collection of Dave Hamilton



April 28, 1957 timetable. The large NYC block letters were adopted with the next edition, on October 27, 1957, and this design largely remained in place for the next ten years. In 1960, higher quality paper finally replaced the newsprint.

During the 1950's and 1960's, there were a number of changes in the content of the timetable, mostly due to cutbacks in service. Schedules for the Penn Yan Branch disappeared in September, 1953, followed by the Falls Road in October of 1957. Service on the Troy Belt Line was no longer included in the February, 1958 timetable, and Auburn trains disappeared from the July 1, 1958 issue.

Both the Adirondack and St. Lawrence divisions, which had most recently been included in Form 116, were merged into Form 100 with the March 1, 1960 edition. Service to Massena ended in October of 1963, and trains on the Adirondack Division ceased running in October of 1964. Trains to Niagara Falls had already been eliminated in 1961, due to a track relocation project.

A special World's Fair cover appeared on the April, 1964 and 1965 timetables, with the fall issues reverting back to the

standard format. For the April 30th and November 5, 1967 issues, the name of the timetable was changed to "Eastern Area," and through train schedules on the Boston & Albany were included.

As the end of the New York Central drew near, the Form 100 timetable was scaled back to a four-panel folded sheet with schedules for the eighteen trains that remained in operation. The December 3, 1967 edition was entitled "Table of Train Schedules," and listed the major cities between New York and Buffalo. It was printed on orange paper, and included the cigar band logo on the front.

The final New York Central System Form 100 to be issued was also the first to use the title of "Empire Service Time Table." Effective on January 26, 1968, the small, single folded sheet included

stylized artwork that depicted a diesel locomotive, passengers, tracks, and the cigar band logo.

On February 1, 1968, the merger with the Pennsylvania RR took effect, and the new Penn Central Company assumed the operation of "Empire Service" passenger trains. The Form 100 timetable continued under Penn Central, in a similar format to the last New York Central issue.

Long gone were the days of the luxury trains, such as the *20th Century Limited*, but limited service remained. Further cutbacks and changes to the timetable were on the horizon, though, and we'll examine them in an upcoming issue.

References:

National Assn of Timetable Collectors. *Compendium of Public Timetables, Part Five*. Hercules, CA: NAOTC, 2000.

