

Clang, clang, clang goes the trolley once again

By KENNETH BROWN

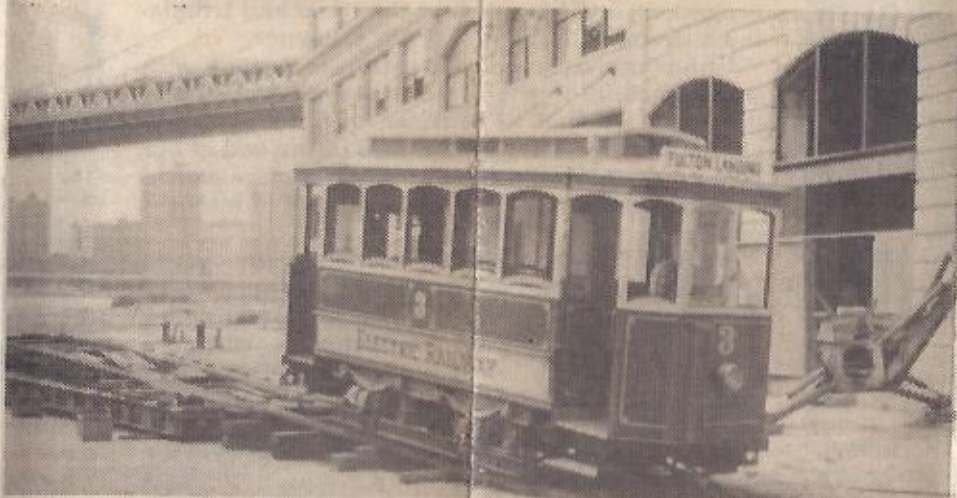
A year ago, this paper ran a five-week series on the exploits of Robert Diamond, a resident of the Midwood-Flatbush area, who followed his adventurous spirit down a manhole in downtown Brooklyn and discovered a long-forgotten subway tunnel, whose existence and reason for being—and subsequent disappearance—was integrally linked to the growth and modern-day emergence of Brooklyn.

At the time, we left Diamond at a point where he was, virtually single-handedly, refurbishing the tunnel, to be turned into a living museum at some future date. An essential part of Diamond's master plan was the installation of a yet-to-be-found antique trolley, much like the type which used to traverse the streets of the borough nearly a century ago.

Plans for the museum have moved full speed ahead, and its centerpiece has materialized, seemingly like the answer to a wish.

Earlier this summer, the Brooklyn Historic Railway Association (BHRA), the group founded and headed by Diamond to coordinate the efforts for the museum, was ecstatic to announce that the first trolley in 40 years was brought back to Brooklyn.

Like the story of the discovery of the tunnel, the gift of the trolley was a bit of serendipity. Diamond recalls how he had appeared on a radio talk show, discussing his incredible story when, several days later, he received a telephone call from a man whom he had never heard of, who told Diamond that



Trolleys are again back on Brooklyn's streets.

it just so happened he had the type of antique trolley the Brooklyn explorer was searching for.

The Atlantic Avenue Tunnel, it seemed, was now on its way to becoming a full-fledged historical centerpiece of New York City, and Diamond, at long last, moved yet another step closer to the fulfillment of his dream.

Diamond was taken to view the trolley which was stored in the Bronx and was more than pleased when he realized the car lived up to everything he had been told about it—and much more.

The trolley was built in Nuremberg, Germany and was typical of the car designs employed in American trolleys of the period. The trolley itself was built in 1897 and is a single truck model. The ten window trolley car was

built for King Oskar II and is particularly ornate, with the finest woods and craftsmanship used in its construction. Arthur Seifert, the man who donated the trolley, was also responsible for restoring the car to its original elegance. The color scheme is tan and burgundy and the car is highlighted by a series of cut, stained glass windows and ruby colored clerestory windows. A number of brass fittings adorn the exterior and interior.

The BHRA hopes to place the trolley inside the tunnel, where it will be operated along the tracks, which, at some near future date, will be extended to run along the Brooklyn waterfront and around the Fulton Ferry Landing.

In May of this year, Diamond approached David Walentas, the developer of the Fulton Landing area,

requesting his assistance in securing a storage site for the vehicle, until it could be placed in operation.

Diamond reports that Walentas gave his immediate support to the proposal, offering Diamond a space, free of charge, at one of Walentas' buildings in Fulton Landing. The site was ideal in that it already sported an abandoned railroad track.

During the 1930s, the trolleys became extinct under the orders of then Mayor Fiorella LaGuardia, who pointed out that the cars got in the way of emergency vehicles rushing to fire or crime scenes.

In other news, Diamond is pleased to announce that BHRA was given a \$5000 grant by the New York Community Trust to help finish the franchise arrangements which are now in their last stages.

The BHRA is open to anyone wishing to be a part of this extraordinary adventure and venture. Membership rates are nominal, with a \$25 rate for regular members and \$10 for senior citizens. There are many benefits which go with membership along with the feeling that you're a modern day Queen Isabella.

For more information, you may write to the Brooklyn Historic Railway Association at 599 East 7th Street, Brooklyn, New York 11218 or you may telephone the BHRA at 941-3160. You may also use this address and telephone number to contact Diamond, who is available to speak and present a slide and photographic show on his discovery and continuing work.