



A Cap Badge Dilemma on the LONG ISLAND RAILROAD

With over 300,000 passengers riding 735 weekday trains over 300 route miles, the Long Island Rail Road is without a doubt the nation's busiest commuter railroad. Originally constructed as a link in a direct route from New York to Boston, by the early 1850's the LIRR had already begun a transformation into the high-capacity passenger line that exists today.

For most of the railroad's history, cap badges worn by LIRR employees were rather plain, often only bearing the occupation or title (Conductor, Trainman, Usher, etc.) and rarely including any type of logo. One such long period of "generic" badge use ended in the early 1970's, when simple badges with the "L.I.R.R." initials were phased in. Train service during this period often left something to be desired, so perhaps there



"1834" locomotive emblem. Also appearing on the badge for the first time was an identification number that passengers could refer to when submitting compliments or complaints to the railroad's management. Presumably meant to protect an individual's personal privacy by not displaying the crew member's name, the plan backfired when the railroad chose to use the employee's "IBM number" instead.

An "IBM number," so called because it was assigned for use in the railroad's IBM computer database, is LIRR lingo for an employee identification number. While non-railroaders may not appreciate its significance, a railroad employee ID is used for payroll, hours of service reporting, training records, and just about everything else of importance. Needless to say, the public display of this number was just as troublesome to LIRR train crews as would have been their names.



was little interest on the part of management to offer more than an abbreviated identification of the company's name. Improvements came in the 1980's, though, with the purchase of new equipment, the electrification of additional lines, and the construction of new maintenance and storage facilities.

April 24, 1984 marked the 150th anniversary of the charter of the Long Island Rail Road, and a special logo was developed in recognition of the company's long and colorful history. An image of the railroad's first locomotive and the date "1834" was encircled by a band with the words "The Long Island Railroad Company" and the MTA logo. Several years later, with the demise of the corporate identities of the Delaware & Hudson and Baltimore & Ohio companies, the LIRR became the oldest railroad in the country (and probably the world) that still operates under its original name.

In the late 1980's, a new cap badge was introduced, including for the first time a Long Island RR logo, in the form of the



The United Transportation Union, which represents conductors and trainmen on the LIRR, filed complaints and instructed its members to refrain from wearing the new badges. Realizing that a poor decision had been made, the railroad's management agreed to replace the badges that displayed the 5-digit IBM numbers (shown at upper left) with identical ones that utilized a 4-digit "uniform" number (shown above). An early version of the new badge was scrapped completely, and use of all badges that included the IBM number was discontinued.

Today, passengers on the Long Island RR can make comments about a crewmember by using his 4-digit uniform number, in conjunction with the train number. And, despite its somewhat rocky start, the new style of LIRR cap badge with its logo that celebrates the railroad's heritage still remains in service.

Thanks to Robert L. Myers, Long Island RR Transportation Manager (and former conductor) for sharing the story of the LIRR badges with employee "IBM numbers" with Key, Lock & Lantern at the 2013 Annual Convention.

