

## **Below Ground Zero, Stirrings of Past and Future**

**By DAVID W. DUNLAP**  
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Having endured the construction and destruction of the World Trade Center above, the 96-year-old Hudson Terminal - now a colossal underground ruin at ground zero - will soon give way to a new transportation hub.

The ground that is to be broken in September for a new trade center terminal on the eastern side of the site includes some astonishing infrastructure: the two-block-long passenger platform level of the Hudson Terminal, later used as loading docks; cast-iron railroad tubes that were turned into truck ramps; a vault where tons of gold and silver were stored; and structural hints - geometrically patterned flooring here, chocolate-colored brickwork there - of the once bustling trade center shopping concourse.

In their place will be the lower levels of the PATH terminal and transportation hub designed by Santiago Calatrava, new pedestrian passageways, shops, parking spaces, loading docks and the basement of the third office tower planned for the site.

For now, there is nowhere else at ground zero where time is more palpably suspended than in the tubes and tunnels and truck bays that once served the World Trade Center and, before that, the Hudson & Manhattan Railroad, predecessor to PATH.

Almost four years after the attack, signs still command truck drivers who have long since vanished: "No Idling." "Not for Service Vehicles." "30 Minute Parking Only for Deliveries. Offenders Will Be Autoclamped and Fined."

Within the cavernous gloom of the deeply ribbed 15-foot-3-inch-diameter tubes, the quiet is broken every few minutes by the disembodied rumble of a PATH train passing nearby.

"It makes you think we should get out of the way, that a light will come down from the end of the tunnel," said Kenneth J. Ringler Jr., executive director of the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, as he stood last week at the mouth of the tubes.

Mr. Ringler said elements of this subterranean realm - perhaps some cast-iron tube rings, certainly some ornamental flooring - would be salvaged.

The authority is committed to preserving the travertine-clad hallway leading to the E train terminus at Chambers Street. It plans to relocate the cruciform steel column that was found at 6 World Trade Center. What the authority does not save, it will document in written descriptions, drawings and large-format photographs.

"It's important that we attempt to preserve some of this for history," Mr. Ringler said. "This is part of the story. It is not necessarily integral to 9/11, but there is history here."

Tangible history on the eastern third of the trade center site may date to the second half of the 18th century, since the blocks between Greenwich and Church Streets were always on dry land, unlike the western part of the site, which was landfill.

Excavation of areas along Vesey and Liberty Streets could conceivably uncover privies, cisterns, wells or cesspools from the 1750's through the 1850's, according to the environmental impact statement for World Trade Center redevelopment project.

In any case, the milestone year of 1909 is abundantly recalled. That was when William G. McAdoo, founder of the Hudson & Manhattan Railroad Company, opened the Hudson Terminal, an underground complex that stretched from Fulton Street to Cortlandt Street,

ushering in three-minute rail service between Jersey City and Lower Manhattan. Above the terminal were two 22-story towers, nearly twins.

Trains approached the Hudson Terminal through the southern tube, which branched into five tracks that looped among six passenger platforms, studded every 20 feet or so with white-tiled columns. They headed back under the river through the northern tube.

In 1962, the bistate Port Authority took over the bankrupt Hudson & Manhattan line - renaming it Port Authority Trans-Hudson - in return for the support of New Jersey officials for a huge trade center in New York. The authority had planned to build the center on the East River, but moved it to align with the Hudson Terminal.

During construction of the center, the U-shaped track array was shifted about 450 feet westward to a new PATH terminal, which opened in 1971. The vestigial Hudson Terminal platform area was turned into loading bays for the two low-rise trade center buildings on Church Street, served by Ramp L (the south tube) and Ramp J (the north tube).

These loading bays look today much as they must have on Sept. 10, 2001. There are still rubber bumpers along the edges of the four-foot-high truck docks. Columns and ramp walls are still color coded: green for 4 World Trade Center, purple for 5 World Trade Center. But Ramp L bears deep scars from Sept. 11, 2001. Steel reinforcing bars embedded in the concrete walls have been twisted into Medusa-like tangles. Steel column flanges are bent like wilting leaves. The tunnel ceiling is bowed and braced.

Nearby, a door with a shattered window leads to the vestibule of the Bank of Nova Scotia vault. Inside the vestibule is a massive steel door with six-inch-thick hinges. Behind that door, the bank was storing about \$200 million in gold and silver when the World Trade Center came under attack.

"The vault was intact and all the silver and bullion was taken out," said Peter L. Rinaldi, general manager of the trade center site in the Port Authority's priority capital programs unit. He witnessed the recovery operation, a month and a half after the attack, and remembers more than 100 armored trucks making their way out of Ramp J.

Directly above the loading bays was the long north-south corridor of the trade center shopping concourse. The most distinctive remnant of the mall is the banded flooring pattern from the crossroads once occupied by a Warner Brothers Studio Store, a Tourneau watch store and Casual Corner and Strawberry clothing stores.

Very little remains of the rest of the concourse except for a small field of 8-by-8-inch floor tiles just south of the crossroads, directly under the steel cruciform.

This was where Benjamin Books once did business, succeeded by Innovation Luggage. Because Innovation's target customer is a 35- to 50-year-old business traveler, the trade center store was in "the center of our demographic," said David R. Petroski, the company's regional director. "Volume-wise, it was headed toward being one of the top two stores."

Briefcases and attaché cases were big sellers. The store featured a large metal globe and five television monitors tuned to business channels.

Mr. Petroski, 39, who was then district manager for New York City, happened to be in the trade center store that Tuesday morning to catch up on work before the staff arrived to open up. Because he left the door unlocked, a customer had already come in to check out a bug-eye-green Timberland knapsack.

The concourse started to shake. Mr. Petroski figured it was the subway. But then came a roar. And then, visible through the plate-glass storefront, a stampede. "Businessmen were running for their lives in huge packs," he said. "My first thought was that there must be a shooter in

the hall. I couldn't comprehend why hundreds of people were running."

The customer dropped the knapsack. Without saying a word to each other, the two men joined the flight. After finding sanctuary in the park at 1 Liberty Plaza, Mr. Petroski heard a rumor that the explosion had been caused by a faulty boiler.

"The store's a bank vault - a quarter million dollars of inventory," he said. "Responsible district manager that I am, I went back into the World Trade Center. Security is saying, 'Get out!' But I'm smarter than that. I know it's just a boiler. I lock everything up."

After leaving the concourse again, Mr. Petroski heard a noise getting louder and louder and louder as he crossed Church Street. "In retrospect, it must have been the sound of the engines," he said. "I turned. That's when the second plane crashed."

Dazed, terrified but uninjured, Mr. Petroski made his way home by subway to Brooklyn. He tried to return to work the next day in the store on the Avenue of the Americas at 21st Street. "But I just spent the morning crying in the stockroom," he said.

At the trade center, of course, one locked door made no difference.