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TRENTON SEWER FLEECE FLEECE

In February, Sen. William Proxmire (D-Wis.) gave his "Golden Fleece of the Month" award to the Environmental Protection Agency for wasting hundreds of thousands of dollars by approving the preservation of a chunk of Trenton, N.J.'s 1890s sewer as part of the city's proposal to upgrade its sanitation system. The facts surrounding the Lambertson Street sewer project, however, simply do not support Proxmire's conclusion of wasted federal dollars.

The increased project costs purported to be a consequence of overzealous historic preservation are, rather, the result of cost escalation due to shifts in the alignment of the new sewer designed, in part, to avoid the right of way of a proposed freeway. The historic sewer issue is being used by city engineers to cover up "foot dragging" in the development of engineering plans long after the formal historic preservation process was resolved in Aug. 1977 by agreeing to keep 900 ft. of the original brick-lined sewer (or approximately 20% of the total project distance).

It is interesting to note that the city's final plan calls for the preservation of all but 400 ft. of the existing Lambertson Street sewer. That is 3,400 ft. more than was stipulated by historic preservation interests. A total of 4,300 ft. of old brick-lined sewer is being bypassed because of engineering and economic considerations. Proxmire's claim to the contrary, the direct costs of historic preservation in this case (i.e., the EPA's compliance with

the provisions of the Natl. Historic Preservation Act) will be only about \$50,000. The indirect costs—due to four changes in alignment and a two-year delay in construction *after* the historic preservation issue was resolved—cannot be calculated.

In 1884, Trenton retained Rudolph Hering, a Philadelphia sanitary engineer, to design a comprehensive sewer plan for the city. Hering had designed the Brooklyn sewer system in the 1860s and Philadelphia's system in the 1870s. The controversial Lambertson Street interceptor is part of Hering's system. It consists of a 4,714-ft. vaulted-brick tunnel and was completed in 1891-92.

The effect of the sewer system upon the city was profound, permitting a new standard of comfortable and convenient living and abating many of the nuisances and health hazards that plagued Trenton and all of America's burgeoning 19th-c. cities. The Lambertson interceptor symbolizes the accomplishments of Trenton's public officials and the city's pioneering efforts in the field of sanitation engineering in the late 19th c. The "Golden Fleece" award, we think, was not justified. *Terry Karschner, Office of Historic Preservation, N.J. Dept. of Environmental Protection.*

Mr. Karschner would like to acknowledge the assistance of colleagues Larry Schmidt and Steven Israel in the preparation of this article.

SPENCER SHOPS SLATED FOR TRANSPORTATION "MUSEUM"

The Southern Railway built its central repair shops outside Salisbury, N.C., because it was halfway between Atlanta and Washington, D.C. Construction began in 1896 on a complex that would become one of the nation's largest railroad shops. Southern named the facility after its first president, Samuel Spencer.

The Spencer Shops [HAER, NR] originally included a 15-stall roundhouse; a machine shop with engine, tool, and grinding rooms; blacksmith shop; boiler house; two car-repair sheds; and storerooms, paint house, oil house, and a 60,000-gal. water tank. Beginning in 1904, Southern embarked on a large-scale building program that lasted until the mid-1920s. A new machine shop and erecting shop (known collectively as the "Back Shop") and a 37-stall roundhouse were added. Remarkably, much of the facility remains, including several buildings from the 1896 construction program. (In 1965, the 1896 woodworking and blacksmith shops, and the 1910 boiler house were demolished.)

In its prime, Spencer daily turned out 75 engines brought in for "light repairs" and one completely rebuilt engine. In addition, passenger and freight cars were serviced, assembled into trains, and dispatched from the Spencer Yards. The shops spawned the town of Spencer, and at one time nearly 2,500 people found employment with Southern in this isolated, one-company town in Rowan Co.

Southern's post-war conversion from steam to diesel power was swift; it was one of the first U.S. railroads to make the switch

completely. In the early 1950s, large numbers of workers were laid off, and by 1960 most of the 168-acre facility had closed. The site lay dormant until 1977, when the N.C. Dept. of Cultural Resources recognized its potential for the interpretation of the state's



Undated view shows workers at Spencer shuttling parts outside the Back Shop. N.C. Divn. of Archives & History photographs.

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