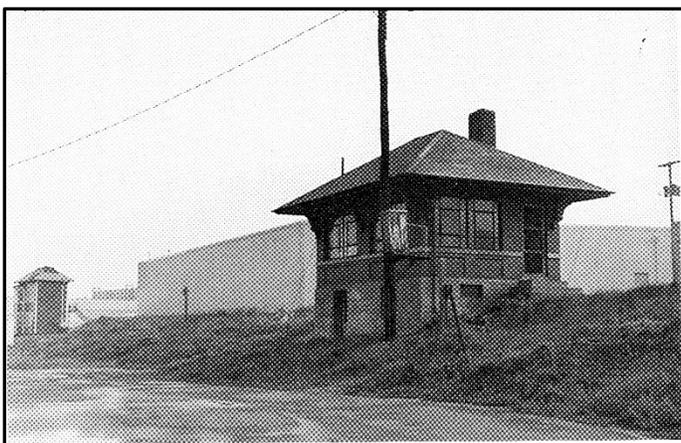


Manchester Tower aka “MA Tower”



Manchester Tower circa 1976. The wooden Yard Office Tower at right in distance was the office for Yard Master Arthur Lynch and the freight clerks. It was demolished June 26, 1986. Scott J. Whitney image, Matthew D. Cosgro Collection.

Combined excerpts from Rick Hurst’s article in the B&MRRHS periodical *B&M Bulletin* (Volume XXVIII, Number 2, 2012) and *Queen City Rails: Manchester’s Railroads 1965 – 1990* by Rick Kfoury



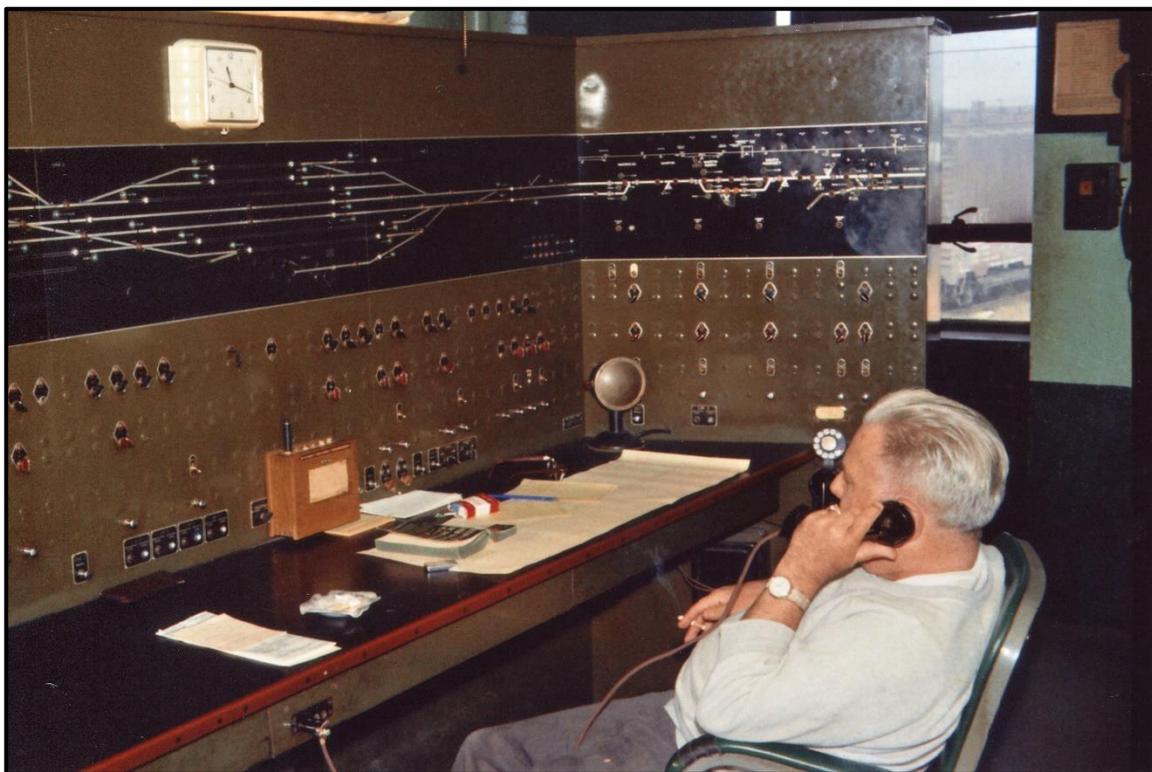
MA Tower in the 1950s. Harry A. Frye Collection, B&MRRHS Archives

Manchester's operating center was undoubtedly Manchester Tower, or “MA”. It was a one-story brick building with basement, which had been constructed in 1944 to replace two traditional wooden towers. It was located alongside the Manchester & Lawrence Branch, a short

distance from the junction switch with the New Hampshire Division main line south of Union

Station and just south of the Yard Office. Round-the-clock Train Directors controlled the railroad using a “Manchester-Type” control machine, the first of its type, manufactured and installed by Union Switch & Signal. As he worked the control machine, the towerman faced west toward the New Hampshire Main Line in the river with his back to the M&L.

MA controlled the double-track New Hampshire main line from a point just south of West Mitchell Street crossing through the Manchester yards and station to a point north of the city. It also controlled the switches and signals to and from the three branches which terminated in Manchester: the Manchester & Lawrence Branch, the Portsmouth Branch and the Goffstown Branch. The Portsmouth Branch connected with the M&L within a half mile of the Tower.



Manchester, NH, October 1967. Train Director Robert Burns at work in MA Tower, likely speaking with a yard crew on the railroad telephone. Richard E. Anderson photo.

With the 1950s single-tracking project between Nashua and Manchester and Manchester and Concord, Manchester Tower assumed control of these new territories. Wings were added to each

side of the control machine to accommodate these additional territories north and south of Manchester.

Boston Division Bulletin Order #200 outlines the track and signal changes on the Manchester & Lawrence and the Portsmouth Branches at Manchester New Hampshire commencing at 9 a.m. Tuesday, December 29th, 1964:

“The two 2-light dwarf signals opposite the Manchester Tower governing northward and southward movements on the Manchester and Lawrence Branch will be permanently discontinued.

The interlock switches and dwarf signals just south of the Elm Street Bridge will be permanently discontinued.

Hand throw switch stands will be installed on the two former interlock switches. These switches will be set normal for movements on the Portsmouth Branch.”



Manchester, NH, June 1969. Boston & Maine Concord-Portsmouth local freight C-10 with EMD GP7 locomotives 1570 and 1567 stop at MA tower to receive orders before departing for the junction with the Portsmouth Branch, ½ mile behind the photographer beyond Elm Street. Richard E. Anderson photo.



Boston & Maine lineside telephone box in Manchester Yard, used for communication between crews and MA Tower.

Railroad Modeler photo, April 1977.

Communication was always vital between the train crews, train directors, and train dispatchers. In these days before radio, railroad telephones provided the necessary tool. If the Train Director needed to contact yard crews he would use the Maintainer Call Button on his signal model board in MA Tower. This would activate a horn at various signal cases in the terminal area to get their attention. It was especially useful if the crews were working down in the “New Yard” or the “Woods Yard” some distance away. They would call him using the lineside railroad telephone. This was also the way that the Train Director could contact the signal maintainers if he was

experiencing signal problems.

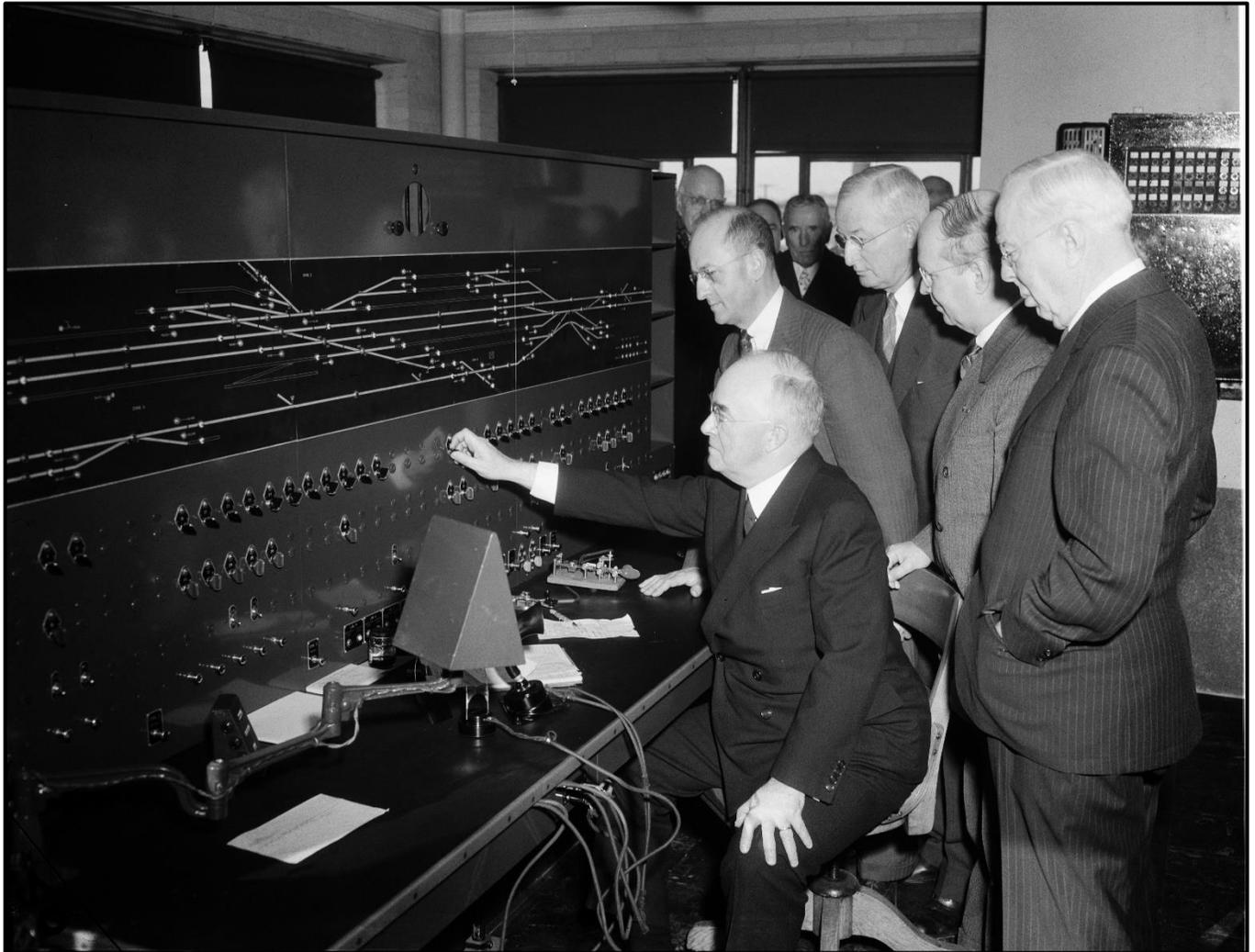
Bulletin Order NE-150 of October 8th, 1974, effective Wednesday, October 9th, 1974 at 7:01am, transferred the signal control machine from MA Tower to the Boston & Maine’s North Billerica MA dispatcher’s office. As such, the signal interlockings at Tie Plant, Merrimack, Reeds Ferry, South Manchester, Manchester, Amoskeag, Martin's North, Hooksett South, and Bow were no longer controlled out of MA Tower. The spring switch at the south end of the southward passing track and the dwarf signal there were removed, and the switches in the yard and to the branches became hand-thrown rather than being controlled from the tower. MA tower had effectively closed. Afterwards, the building was, and still is used by the railroad for storage. It is owned today by the Boston & Maine Corporation, doing business as Pan Am Railways. A similar tower built during the same period in Concord, NH, also survives, but was closed long before MA Tower.



ABOVE: May 19, 1974. Looking north on the Manchester & Lawrence Branch towards junction with NH Division mainline, with MA Tower at left. Wooden Yard Office Tower at right in distance was demolished June 26, 1986. Albert G. Hale image, Walker Transportation Collection, Historic Beverly.

BELOW: MA Tower, May 11, 2019. One of two remaining railroad structures still standing in Manchester Yard. Rick Kfoury photo.





ABOVE: Manchester, NH, December 13, 1944. Boston & Maine President French opening MA Tower.

Digital image made from photo negative in the MacMillan/Hutchinson Collection, Boston & Maine Railroad Historical Society Archives. Cat. No. 2021.4.1. Gift of David Hutchinson.



ABOVE: Manchester, NH, December 13, 1944. A busy Manchester Yard showing the older semaphore signals which were retired once MA Tower and its CTC signal system came online. Manchester Union Station can be seen in the background.

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