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From: notify@yahoogroups.com on behalf of taylornoonan [michael@taylornoonan.com]
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To: mike@taylornoonan.com
Subject: Fwd: Re: Flyer E901a test bus

2700, the FIRST prototype, I'm afraid, went to the bus yard in the sky around 1993. However, it did have an interesting history, in that after it returned to Flyer, someone there decided to try and sell Toronto and Hamilton on new trolleys.

The problem was that they wisely knew that neither would accept the oddball doors, particularly the front door, so someone decided to modify the coach and started cutting into the body in order to relocate the front axle farther forward (the E901A, or rather the "A" part, was to set the bus apart from the 901 model because Vancouver's D901A/E901A had a shorter wheelbase to allow the large front door).

The problem was that whoever made this decision did not know that
a) it's not as simple as merely cutting into the body, moving the front axle, and then repainting over the mess that's left, and
b) around the time this happened, Hamilton decided to retire it's trolley fleet and already there were inklings that Toronto would follow suit (they did in fact abandon the system in 1992, but restored two routes for a short time)

Prior to this, the orange was repainted red and two thin white stripes were added and the window line was repainted black making it look very much like a TTC bus. Andy Gold got pictures of the interior which showed that the number 2700 was still affixed.

In any case, after the rebuild was abandoned, the bus sat for a couple of years until after Toronto ceased trolley operations and at that point, New Flyer, admitting defeat, scrapped the bus.

You may recall that above I said the FIRST 2700 - one thing you may not have known was that there were TWO 2700s - the prototype and a second preproduction unit that was converted to an E902 and sent back to Vancouver as #2947, or the last unit of the batch. This is the 2700 you probably remember, as the 1st 2700 was not the one used by Westinghouse to test the propulsion. The 2nd 2700 actually arrived as #2701 but was renumbered after the prototype returned to Flyer as the real production 2701 was being assembled. The original 2700 had the front fleet number in white, while the Westinghouse 2700 had it in black like the delivery units.

The 1st 2700 was used as a demonstrator for awhile, running in Dayton, and San Francisco, and even got to Dallas (who have no trolleys) for some reason before returning to Winnipeg.

One more thing - units 2701-2774 are model E901A while 2775 and up, including 2947 ex 2700, are model E902. One difference was that the D901As had doors with little tiny windows in them (is this a theme with Vancouver trolleys, or what) and a thick centre frame while the E902 had modified doors with wider windows and thinner center band. The E901As were all retrofitted with these doors, so there is really no difference between both groups save a few minor things that eventually all got retrofitted anyways.

However, if you are really observant, and are on 2947, you will notice a few very minor variants from say bus #2946.

One other oddity concerns #2915, which is in fact the final bus built of the order. For some reason this number got skipped due to an error at Flyer - the bus built between #2914 and 2916 was a demonstrator and someone forgot about it and assigned 2916 to the next Vancouver bus built. The error was finally corrected with the final unit built being numbered 2915, and the Westinghouse prototype becoming #2947.

More trivia - bus #2722 was the first painted in the BCT red/blue, but near the front door the blue stripe dropped vertically down to the bottom of the red and was slightly wider -

and it was here that the UTA double arrow was affixed. This of course never made it to Vancouver, and the rest had the blue stripe carry on to the front of the bus at the same level.

It was a couple of years later (mid-1994) that BCT decided to eliminate the blackout front on all the buses and the entire fleet was repainted so that the blue and white carried across the front.

The inside of those doors then became a constant complaint with drivers complaining about glare. At first BCT had a simple solution, sort of: They painted the top half of the doors flat black. Later, the absurdity of this became evident and the entire inside of the doors were painted black. The dashboards were repainted from chocolate brown (and green on the GMs) to flat black, and the upper inside destination cap, roof, and in fact the entire entryway was repainted flat black.

The seats on the entire Flyer order (and the GM Hillclimbers) came with orange vinyl inserts. After BCT took over some of the trolleys had alternating seat colors - one row was red, the other blue, until eventually the seats got slashed and a brown-colored repair vinyl "paint" got added to the mix.

Eventually most of the seat inserts were changed to blue on the GMs but to this day the trolley fleet has an odd assortment of orange, red, blue, and brown seats depending on which vehicle you are on.

2937 had a little "incident" whereby, in full view of the Oakridge offices, it caught fire in June 1987 and managed to burn to the ground before the VFD managed to turn their hoses on it. 2934 hit a downed tree on UBC Boulevard in November 1991 and for awhile it looked like it would join 2937 in trolley heaven, but it was eventually rebuilt with a homebuilt dashboard.

Others have found overhead poles and parked cars and have been repaired (some over and over), others decided to leave Kootenay Loop sans driver, and they were fixed too.

Of course, nobody at Flyer would recognize the E901A/E902 fleet you ride on today; they have been heavily modified through two major retrofit programs (TRIP I and TRIP II) and countless other little fixes were added, because, six months after arriving, the first 150 units began breaking down or "HOT BUS" lights started coming on in late January of 1983, causing the majority to be removed from service.

This was caused by a really unusual series of events, starting with a rather cold, snowy winter in which Vancouver had to put salt on the roads, then a sudden thaw with a lot of rain, which mixed with the salt residue and started spraying up into the electrical components, causing small short circuits and sensor failures.

A number of Brills, that had ceremoniously been retired and parked at Dominion Bridge, had to be put back in service. Victoria also provided a number of TDH4519s, TDH5303s, SDH5302s and one 30-foot Orion - which promptly broke down and was returned - the other buses stuck around and became 6748, 6751, 6904, 6907, 6909, 6711, 6956, 6957, and 6958 - until EXPO 86 when they were finally numbered into the Vancouver fleet as 5501-5502, 3691-3692, 5601, 3693-3694, and 7201-7203 (not to be confused with the 1989 renumbering of 3201-3203 to 7201-7203).

During EXPO these got shifted a bit - 3691-3694 going to POCO as 9691-9694. All of them were retired or sent back to Victoria at the end of EXPO except 7202, which went to Maple Ridge as 6318

Anyways, that's pretty much all you NEED to know about the Flyer E901A/E902s, and probably a fair bit more.

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