

TRANSCRIPT

THE RACE UNDERGROUND: The Nation's First Subway

Video 3: Going Underground

INTRODUCTORY SLATE: Opening Day, September 1, 1897

NARRATOR: Passengers excitedly waved American flags as they rode the first subway car in their country's history.

DOUG MOST: It pulled up right to the crest of Arlington Street where it was going to go underground and into the tunnel. The first subway car just clanged its gong and just went down the ramp and everybody who was on the subway car stood up, glimpsed ahead to see what they could see and in fact someone on the back of the car yelled, "Down in front!"

NARRATOR: "The passengers...had packed themselves in like sardines," noted the Boston Globe, "And...yelling like...wild animals, dipped down the incline for the underground run."

BRIAN CUDAHY: The headline in many papers was, "People Leave the Face of the Earth." And they left the face of the earth and they went under it. People would previously leave the face of the earth in a condition where they wouldn't return to the face of the earth. They'd be buried. Now people were traveling beneath the ground and emerging later.

NARRATOR: City officials were shocked at the day's final numbers: 250,000 people rode the underground rails of the subway on Boston's first day.

STEPHEN PULEO: It was like a light switch went off once the subways began running. All of those aboveground trolleys in the downtown area are gone. It accomplishes exactly what it's

supposed to do. It alleviates congestion in the City of Boston and it creates a transportation grid and framework for the city for years and years to come.

NARRATOR: In its first year of operation fifty million passengers rode the Boston subway and the once frightening idea of riding a train underground became a part of daily life in cities across America. Within ten years of Boston's unceremonious opening day, New York and Philadelphia opened their own subways with more American cities soon to follow.

GELFAND: The decision to build a subway is remarkable in demonstrating how Americans were willing to try something new and place their bets on the future. That they understood that technology was reshaping their world and electricity, the tremendous potential of it, is going to be unleashed here in the subway system.