

The Mullaney Special

By Chris Hirschhorn

My grandfather, Thomas F. Mullaney, came to Massachusetts as a teenager via a ship from Ireland. He was traveling with his mom and siblings. When his father came, they bought a farm, similar to their farm in Ireland. Then dad died and young Tom didn't like farming so they sold the farm and young Tom took himself to visit the State Senator.

He told the Senator that he heard of a new field called electricity and wanted to be involved in it. The Senator told grandpa that he was meeting that very day with the owner of an electric company and would suggest that they hire Tom. Grandpa got a job and watched how the engineers fixed equipment problems, etc.

Then Grandpa and his family moved from Massachusetts to New York City where he decided to have his own electric company. His company installed and ran New York City's Broadway Subway line. How he did this, I don't know, but he did. My mother and I were the first persons to travel on this subway line. My mom told the story of when she and I would be test riding the trains with Grandpa. As we exited from these rides, people would ask, "When will the line be open for us to ride?" Grandpa and mom replied, "Soon. We are test riding today."

In college, I was a math major and often when I was riding on the subway, the housing that hid the mechanism that moved the train doors was missing, I saw mathematically how the train doors opened and closed. For a young one like me, it was really quite thrilling.

When I joined the consulting firm of John Diebold & Associates, I was asked what professional organization I belonged to. I looked up women's organizations and joined the Society of Women Engineers. I was the first and only Computer Engineer in the Society of Women Engineers at that time. It was 1959.

Further, I had the good fortune of being sent by the Diebold Group to Kentucky to install their 650 computer system and train their staff. Of course, John Diebold purchased a box of seats for three years to the Kentucky Derby's and I attended all three with Kentucky Management and John Diebold, himself. What a great happenstance!