

The frequency of the railways

100 years of 16 2/3 Hertz Railway Electricity

PHOTO: DB AG/WOLFGANG KLEE

This year New Yorkers are talking about their Grand Central Terminal. And they are not the only ones, because after all, the world's most famous train station is celebrating its anniversary. It opened a hundred years ago, on 2 February 1913, the main reason for its construction being the desire for a clean railway, an end to steam and gases. And this was a wish that not only existed in the United States. When Grand Central opened its gates, a new railway age also began in Germany. 67 tracks, 44 platforms – Grand Central in Manhattan is the world's largest train station. But it is not just its size that makes it so important for the history of railways. It is also, and above all, the first metropolitan station built exclusively for electric trains. The age of steam locomotives was inexorably coming to a close by the second decade of the last century. Both in America and on the European continent. As well as in Germany.

Born 1912/13

In 1879, Siemens & Halske presented the first direct-current electric locomotive. In 1905, the Münchner Lokalbahn AG started to run the first scheduled transport with electric trains on German soil between Murnau and Oberammergau. Electric trains had thus already existed for some time when the New Yorkers inaugurated their new giant station. But what did not yet exist was a uniform railway electricity supply. And in terms of traction power, history was

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