September 2020

Goings On at Seashore -

Pumpkin Patch Trolley events are ongoing on October 2, 3, 4, 9, 10, & 11 from 11AM-3PM. The perfect socially distanced fall event for families and friends of all ages to enjoy! This is the only Fall event in the line-up that is still being held while following every current pandemic restriction. Come out to the Seashore Trolley Museum and take a trolley ride on our heritage railroad to the pumpkin patch. Each member in your group can select a socially distanced pumpkin to take home! Hop back on the trolley with your pumpkin and enjoy a 30-minute ride on our heritage railroad. Back at the Visitors Center there will be pandemic-friendly activities to enjoy! Put those pumpkins back in your car and enjoy the rest of the pandemic-friendly museum. Tickets are available for rides that depart the Visitors Center at 10:50AM, 11:35AM, 12:20PM, 1:05PM, 1:50PM and 2:35PM. Multiple trolleys will be operating during each time slot to ensure social distancing on the trolley ride is maintained.

A note about tickets: If you notice that one of the ticket types that you would like to purchase is sold out; it means the museum has hit 50 attendees in that time slot, and that's theCOVID-max. Check events and notices on the museum’s website for updates as to specific activities.

Ongoing Work - Lots of ongoing work has been underway with volunteers have also been hard at work on the Riverside and Visitors Center renewal projects. A hi-rail bucket truck has joined the museum's work vehicle fleet - thanks to an anonymous donor. This will be a great resource for use on the main campus and the main line. The Overhead Department will be developing a training program during the off-season.

COVID-19 - A major change as far as state regulations is that visitors from Massachusetts are now excluded from the state quarantine and testing requirements. The Museum is open Wednesdays, Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays from 10AM-5PM, COVID-19 policies and purchase of tickets in advance of a visit are available at:

Do You Recognize?

Last Month’s Do You Recognize -

The Charles City Western Railway Co. (CCW) was started for what were the usual reasons for many startups. There was a desire in the local business community to have more choice and competition in long distance transportation and in the early 1900s this meant rail. Although Charles City, IA was already served to two railroads (the Illinois Central and Chicago and the Chicago Milwaukee and St. Paul railroads) there was a Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific Railroad terminal some 13 miles to the southwest at Marble Rock, IA. The CCW was organized in February 1910 by a number of local bankers with the intent to have the new railway bridge the 13 mile gap and give access to the Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific.

Among businesses to be served there was the large Oliver Plow Works and the large Sherman Nursery, both seeking improved transportation.

The CCW opened on January 1, 1911 over the 13 mile route with passenger service being provided by a 55 ft. gasoline powered McKeen wind splitter No. # 51. Also a home brew locomotive built on a McKeen power truck, and two gasoline powered streetcars for city service. A steam locomotive was acquired in 1911 for freight service and another in 1912.

Gasoline propulsion proved problematic and the line was electrified in 1915 with an eight mile extension built to the northeast as part of a plan to connect with yet a fourth railroad at either of two points some 12 and 17 miles from the end of the extension. This ultimately proved to be end of the line to the northeast with the linkup never occurring. With the coming of electrification two McGuire-Cummings city cars were acquired for the city service (No’s #10 & 11) and No.#50 a combine built.
by McGuire-Cummings in 1915 was acquired to replace the wind splitter. No. #300, a McGuire-Cummings locomotive was also acquired in 1915. Apparently a most attractive part of buying from McGuire-Cummings was that they would take your company stock in payment.

There was somewhat of a theme to most of our company’s electric cars in that they were either McGuire-Cummings products apparently purchased with stock or they were second hand.

The railway served a major tractor manufacturing company, Oliver Plow Works, that produced steam and gas powered tractors. The plant opened in 1901 and by 1911 was employing 1,100 people - one fifth of the city’s population - and by 1970 was employing 3,000.

In 1903 the factory produced the first successful production-model tractor line in the U.S. The railway also served a very large Sherman Nursery that in the 1920s was claimed to be the largest grower of evergreens in the world with some 50,000,000 plants in the fields as well as being a major rose producer. Also served were numerous other smaller businesses.

No. #50, the McGuire-Cummings combine, soldiered on through two owners of the railway and two heritage museums. At the second museum it still transports visitors to this day.
During the First World War the railway received some publicity as the first electric railway in the state to have a “motorwoman”. Coincidentally the young lady was also the daughter of the city’s mayor.

Local city service was discontinued in 1921 but the interurban continued to provide two round-trips daily except Sunday over the entire 21 mile system end to end until 1952 when the “freight-only” sign was hung out. At the end of December 1963 our railway was acquired by the Iowa Terminal Railroad. The two parts of the new line did not intersect and were run as separate divisions. Plans were underway to build a twenty-odd mile link up when the new owner’s death in 1965 ended the effort. In 1968 the CCW lost its catenary to a tornado that devastated much of its home city. Diesels replaced the electrics and the northeast extension of 1915 was trimmed back about five miles for a total line of 15.7 miles of the original 21 mile system. Freight traffic continued to shrink and by the mid 1970s the trackage representing the remainder of our railway was abandoned.

This Month’s Do You Recognize -

Our electric railway of interest this month qualifies as a rather small one serving a small city and environs with about eight miles of route. The line’s total fleet over its 26-year lifespan consisted of 15 powered units including two snowplows, notably all Wason products, and two 4-wheel flat trailers of indeterminate origins.

The city (pop. 9,165 in 1900) for which the company was named served as the county seat and was also the only city in the county. Today the city’s is estimated just over 23,000 and it is still the only city in the county. The city became a manufacturing hub for
wooden-ware, pottery, glass, soap, woolen textiles, shoes, saddles, mowing machines, carriages and sleighs. It also had a brickyard and foundry. This manufacturing success was supported by the city being served by two steam railroads. These roads were both absorbed by the region’s Class 1 railroad and the city included large shops of this railroad and two rail yards. Changes in the pattern of manufacturing throughout the country and the impact of the Great Depression severely affected the region.

The first effort at establishing our railway came in 1887 when a group of city residents were granted a charter for a street railway company. Perhaps because potential investors may have been somewhat astute there was no progress until 1893 when some of the original incorporators joined with others to form a new corporation. This new entity was incorporated by the state legislature in March 1893 as an electric railway with the previous street railway charter being revoked at the same time. In late 1895 the company petitioned to extend the route some three miles into a neighboring community. This extension was approved by the state railroad commissioners in early 1896. After some discussion as to the type of power distribution the city council approved overhead trolley wires in March of 1897. The railway and the local gas light and power company were given permission to erect joint poles through the center of the city. March of 1899 saw another extension of the charter. Authority to construct a crossing at grade on the main street and three others at
industrial sidings was granted as a prelude to the start of construction. A money problem yet again raised its ugly head and the company found itself unable to raise construction funds from local sources. In early 1900 discussions were held with the representative of a Boston firm. Ultimately the line’s incorporators voted to sell their interests to this individual. In May of 1900 the electric railway was again reorganized and in that same month construction finally began some 13 years after the initial incorporation.

Regular service commenced in early September 1900. In November another extension from the city center to a park west of the center was opened giving an overall system length of six and a quarter miles. In late 1901 the railway sought authority to build southeastward to a small community about six miles distant. Approval was received from the railroad commissioners and construction started the following spring. The perennial lack of funds interceded and progress was very slow. Ultimately approximately two miles of the proposed six mile branch were completed. Other extensions were proposed and approved but never built. The electric railway acquired a large piece of land at the end of the 1901 extension and constructed a recreation park where such entertainments as bowling, shooting, roller skating, swimming, boating, band concerts, dancing, and movies were available. The area was very popular on weekends but, as with many trolley parks, primarily only on weekends. Trolley parks tend to provide weekend ridership to bridge the drop from weekday traffic. Unfortunately, other than workers riding to and from their jobs, there wasn’t too much weekday traffic either. The main line had started at a 30-minute headway in 1900 and both lines enjoyed this level of service for a brief time. Headway on both lines were soon reduced to 40 minutes with extra cars when factory shifts were changing. These headways were maintained throughout the life of the electric railway.

In 1900 four twenty-foot closed cars were acquired (two new and two second-hand) and five 10-bench opens (three new and two second-hand) from Wason. Nineteen hundred also saw
two four-wheel nose plows, also from Wason. That was all for equipment purchases until 1922 when three single-truck Birneys were acquired from Wason with a fourth coming in 1923. The two second-hand closed cars were scrapped upon the arrival of the 1922 Birneys. The Birneys faired poorly as by the time of their arrival the limited infrastructure maintenance had resulted in spots of track being submerged, especially in the spring. The Birney motors took unkindly to being splashed with water and exhibited an annoying propensity to either short circuit or simply burn out. In those instances the remaining old and faithful closed cars from 1900 would be trotted out to keep things going.

The grand thoroughfare of the city’s main street. There are two trolleys - #23 & #24 by the monitor roofs, a newfangled motorcar, wagons, sleighs, and about a third of the way down on the right a steam locomotive just peeking out between the buildings.
Finally in 1926 the electric railway sought and received permission to motorize. The trolleys were replaced by six Graham Brothers (Detroit) 21-passenger buses and two second hand 15-passenger Ford buses.

The railway had apparently extracted its moneys-worth from the rolling stock as everything but the Birneys was scrapped. The Birneys were sold to a small line in New York’s Southern Tier Region. Three were supposedly operational and the fourth provided parts. These cars continued to operate through that company’s demise in 1930.

Our electric railway continued its bus operations until the last day of 1929 when it was succeeded by a local transportation company. As late as 1956 this transportation company was still providing city service and suburban service in the area originally served by our electric railway.

The next Library Committee meeting will be held through a virtual Zoom meeting on November 7, 2020 at 10 AM. Materials and login information will be distributed.

A Library Committee meeting was held through Zoom on September 12, 2020.

Our community partner York County Community College is entering its Fall Semester with a revised schedule due to the COVID-19 pandemic. On site hands-on instruction is only occurring where absolutely essential - other instruction is through virtual sessions.

The Library Committee’s meetings on Saturdays (10AM) will tentatively be virtual meetings on a bimonthly basis on the odd months. Additional information will be forthcoming.

Saturday - Workshops only (10AM - 2 PM) are still cancelled

The Wednesday Evening Workshops Are Cancelled - hopefully resumption in the future.

For further information/questions concerning the Library please contact Randy Leclair (207-641-9324 - text preferred) or Karen Dooks (781 799-5868).

By Karen Dooks, Chair
Links:

More than 1000 of the images are accessible online = [https://digitalmaine.com/trolley_images/](https://digitalmaine.com/trolley_images/)

Facebook page = [https://www.facebook.com/groups/44932548777/](https://www.facebook.com/groups/44932548777/)

Seashore Library On-Line Resources -

A library resources page originally developed by Amber Tatnall dealing with useful and interesting resource material including among other things links to some three decades of the Street Railway Journal and the Electric Railway Journal on line is located at on line resources: [https://virtual.yccc.edu/c.php?g=238406&p=3225494&preview=7b52901d1f51db2b76cb2a141ca8589c](https://virtual.yccc.edu/c.php?g=238406&p=3225494&preview=7b52901d1f51db2b76cb2a141ca8589c)

or this handy tinyurl works as well: [http://tinyurl.com/zwhndoe](http://tinyurl.com/zwhndoe)

The Library continues to upload material to the various sections of DigitalMaine - The DigitalMaine Repository is a partnership of the Maine State Library, Maine State Archives and community institutions around the state.

The uploads to the new documents area are quite fascinating as they allow you to literally leaf through the documents.

[https://digitalmaine.com/trolley_museum/](https://digitalmaine.com/trolley_museum/)
[https://digitalmaine.com/trolley_blueprints/](https://digitalmaine.com/trolley_blueprints/)
[https://digitalmaine.com/trolley_images/](https://digitalmaine.com/trolley_images/)
[https://digitalmaine.com/trolley_documents/](https://digitalmaine.com/trolley_documents/)

Please remember when sending donations for the library to note that it is for Library Development – Fund 951.

A Little Bit of Something -

Our Do You Recognize candidate for this month had a 100% Wason fleet for its 26-year existence. In working on the item I came across an April 1896 writeup in the Street Railway Journal on the history of Wason looking back from 1896 to its origins in 1845. I find it interesting to see the past in our ancestor’s words. The typeface is a bit small and somewhat difficult to read - sorry for that.
The Works of a Large Car Company.

The Wason Manufacturing Company is one of the oldest establishments in the United States engaged in the manufacture of cars. It began with the building of freight cars by T. W. Wason in 1856. Car building of all kinds was then in its infancy and passenger work was only another form of coach or omnibus building. It is and extends on both sides of the Connecticut Valley Railroad. It is about seventy acres in extent and the company occupies about seventeen acres. When the shops were built this land was supposed to be ample for all possible contingencies, but even this generous provision has not been altogether sufficient.

The works were laid out by Mr. Fisk, who had the general manager, W. H. Paige, made a study of most of the shops then in existence. Through the center of the plot of land runs a transfer table of unusual size, the track upon it being forty-five feet in length. The three tracks for the table traverse the whole length of the grounds, a distance of more than 1000 ft. Originally, as designed by Mr. Paige, this table with its engine and platform, which is seen in the center of the yard near the office building, was driven by a chain fixed at each end. Experience has shown that the chain was not necessary, and a simple bearing wheel running on a center rail and driven by a chain from a sprocket wheel on the engine shaft moves the table with the greatest accuracy and covers the seventy tracks which run at right angles across the works quickly and with great accuracy.

The building in front is that devoted to the offices, drawing room, reading room, store rooms and other departments intimately connected with the office work. The passenger erecting shop just behind the office is 117 ft. x 75 ft. The foundry is 170 ft. x 62 ft., and has a deck roof. Here are the 80,000 lb. Howe track scales, several cupolas capable of melting some forty tons per day. The wheel casting house is 40 ft. x 28 ft. The wheel capacity is about 100 wheels per day. The machine shop is 96 ft. x 45 ft., the lower story being devoted to heavy and the upper story to light work. Connected with the machine shop is a smithy shop 100 ft. x 45 ft., and having an extension which is used as an iron room. This shop has sixty side fires. The paint shop beyond the erecting shop is 500 ft. x 75 ft. It has space for thirty-two passenger cars. The wood working shop is a building 200 ft. x 62 ft., two stories high. The upper floor is devoted to upholstering, varnishing and trimming. One of the features of this building which was new at the time it was put up and which has been of material advantage ever since, was the fact that every piece of machinery rested on a foundation which was independent of the floor. Upon the ground as has been a very common practice in buildings of this character, but was raised far enough to allow a circulation of air beneath it. Wherever it became necessary to locate a machine the floor was cut and a foundation made directly on the soil.

There is also a lumber shed 420 ft. x 40 ft. wide and two stories high. The tracks for passenger and other cars are built in a shop

FIG. 2.—METHOD OF PUTTING PANELS IN PLACE. FIG. 3.—SIDE VIEW OF VESTIBULE.
60 ft. x 45 ft. On the left of the engraving is seen a large new shop which has been erected more recently, an overflow from the original plot of land.

One of the points of interest about the works is the lumber yard to which Mr. Fisk has devoted a great deal of attention. In fact, the quality of lumber has been one of the objects of the company for years. Mr. Fisk, the president, has spent an unusual amount of time and a great deal of labor and expense in experimenting with various means for drying lumber and for putting it in the best possible condition for use. He has also done much toward having timber of all kinds tested to ascertain its suitability for various purposes. In this matter he was one of the first men to demonstrate the usefulness of Oregon pine. His experiments in oak are numerous and he is constantly testing.

The Wason Manufacturing Company has been known for a great many years as the builder of a high grade of steam cars. The company has also for many years engaged in the manufacture of street cars, and if we remember rightly built for the West End road, of Boston, the first street car having a monitor or raised deck roof. This was trussed from the corners of the car to the center of the roof in a most peculiar way. Apparently the builders expected that the sides of the roof would fall inward. It was a very handsome car for 1857 and attracted much attention. The extensive use of the bob-tailed car was carried so far and so completely covered with patents, that the company for many years after their introduction confined themselves exclusively to steam car work. However with the introduction of heavier cars and the demands made upon them, they a few years ago re-opened the street car department and have been since that time manufacturing cars for street railway service. Recognizing the fact that workmanship was one of the three essentials for a durable street car, the president took unusual pains in organizing the department which is kept entirely distinct from the steam work.

The accompanying engravings show some of the special features of its standard car for electric railway work. The first feature that attracts attention is the careful and effective method employed for holding the panels in position against the ribs while the glue is setting. This is shown in principle in Fig. 2, which also gives an illustration of the end of a standard car in the white. The method is to secure with several bolts at the level of the belt rail a heavy padded rail the whole length of the side of the car. This is done after the panels have been tacked on. When this is in place a brace is put on at every rib, which hooks at one end under the rail, and at the other end is lashed by a screw clamp, as shown. Each panel is treated by itself, though in the engraving both upper and lower panels have braces and clamps in position for the purpose of illustrating the principle. These were put in place to show the method, the panels having been glued and clamped some time previously. The marks of the pressure show very plainly on the lower or curved panel. The system is one which effectually brings the inside surfaces of panel and rib into contact. The amount of curvature given to the side of the car is somewhat greater than usual, a very desirable feature since it materially increases the stiffness of the structure. This is best seen in Fig. 5, which represents the inside of the car.

The reader will notice that the stands or posts for the truss rod are not of the usual form, but of fixed length, as high as can be carried beneath the seat. The posts themselves from the window rail down are heavier than usual, having more width on their inside edges.

The ribs are closely spaced. The rails are chamfered so as to throw off dirt, and blocking is placed upon the sill so that dirt cannot remain in contact with the panels and collect water. The inside window rail forms part of the framing of the car and is secured to each post by three screws.

The construction of the plate is another feature that should be noted in Fig. 5. Instead of being a single piece of wood into which the slots are mortised, it really consists of three pieces. One of these is the letterboard, another a thin plate comprising the usual position and having the mortised into it, and the other member an inside rail which is halved onto the posts like the window panel or letterboard. These three pieces are glued and screwed firmly to each other and to the posts and form an exceedingly stiff, strong and very light member. The construction also appears in Fig. 4, which shows the inside of the end of the car and illustrates the exceedingly strong double corner posts which are used. The panel may be very properly considered, belonging to the box variety and is at the corner of the car, not only strengthened by the inner post, but is reinforced by what would be termed the lintel of the vestibule, which continues from the inner post to the vestibule corner post. (See both Figs. 2 and 5.)

Coming to the corner posts, best seen on the outside in Fig. 2, we find that the upper members of the car frame at the corner and the vestibule are made into one piece by carrying the upper outside finishing strip entirely around the corner of the vestibule past the car corner, past the first window post in a single piece of bent wood. This long splice is also covered by the drip rail. The finish on the corner opposite the door is better in Fig. 3. Incidentally it should be noted that these cars are finished with a door on one side only of the vestibule, a construction which in itself materially increases the stiffness of the car and at the same time gives a stronger support to the vestibule. The construction of the vestibule is best seen in Fig. 6. It is practically a prolongation of the car body, the upper part of it taking the raised roof and plates as integral portions. The great depth of the vestibule roof timbers with the way in which the posts are secured into them makes this practically as strong as any part of the car body. The end timber of what would be the platform is made in several strips and is supported by four platform timbers of the usual fashion. The horizontal resistance to collision or butting is secured by an oak or hard pine platform floor 14 ins, in thickness, which is driven in solidly to form a bearing against the end sill of the car. The end sill itself is of oak measuring 8 ins. x 8 ins. It is the practice of the company to put these sills in of two 4 ins. x 8 ins. pieces laid horizontally. The object in doing this is to secure a perfect dryness of the wood. An 8 ins. x 8 ins. stick is seasoned with the greatest difficulty, while a 4 ins. x 8 ins. stick can be obtained readily perfectly dry. The result is that this made sill is stronger and stiffer than the solid stick.

The lower plate of the raised deck is a single piece of yellow Douglas fir (Oregon pine). The tightness of this timber and its strength make it particularly suitable for these long sticks which must, if possible, be both light, strong and stiff.

The iron work upon these cars is somewhat peculiar and very interesting. It is best seen by reference to Fig. 3, which shows the end of the car and the side of the vestibule opposite the door. In Fig. 6, the method of putting on one of the corner irons and the window strap is shown, and in this figure the peculiar form of the corner panel iron is best seen. It has, in the form of a strap, a flat plate on the end of the car and a flange which turns up against the inner corner post. It is formed of a single piece of malleable iron. The other straps in Fig. 3 run around continuously, but at the inside angle of the vestibule are covered by malleable plates. The dash, or front of the vestibule, is a single plate of iron secured, as shown, under the corner of the car and taking a bearing against a casting which takes the truss rod. It gives a very firm support at the right place.

There may be doubts in the minds of some in regard to the theory of the platform, and whether it should be made flat as strong as the car, some advocating its use as a mere buffer or breaking piece which shall give way before the car body is injured. With the vestibule however a large number of builders and experienced car users have reached the conclusion that it should be made as strong as the car frame itself, and if provided with a sufficient buffer iron
Main Line - Availability

If you are not on our direct distribution list and would like to be please drop a note to TheMainLine@ramsdell.com.

Regards,

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