December 2020

Goings On at Seashore -

As we close in on the New Year Seashore has been closed to the public since the end of October and the November bus photo shoot. That being said there have been an amazing amount of things underway with more to come.

Toast to Donors and Volunteers on Zoom -

On the evening of December 29, 2020 In place of Seashore’s annual, in-person appreciation dinner that typically occurs this time of year, a Zoom gathering was held to toast all of Seashore’s supporters and to thank all who helped the museum get through this challenging season. Accomplishments from 2020 were recapped with pictures, and awards given to members who went above and beyond in 2020.

Seeing no reason to reinvent the wheel the following material was borrowed verbatim, with the permission of Katie Orlando, from materials she and Jim Schantz distributed on the 30th:

Last evening, we hosted our Toast to Donors and Volunteers on Zoom and had a great turnout. In case you missed it, we announced the winners of the George Sanborn Silent Leader Award and the Roger E. Somers Legacy Award.

The George Sanborn Award recipient is selected by Seashore’s Board Chair, President & CEO, and Executive Director, and is given to a long-time volunteer who works tirelessly behind-the-scenes and contributes more time than any other member would realize, no matter what it takes. Past winners are CC Clapp (2018) and Fred Hessler (2019).

The 2020 George Sanborn Silent Leader Award recipient is Phil Morse. Phil has been a Seashore volunteer for decades. He filled many roles on campus in 2020; in addition to continuing to serve as the Narcissus Restoration Project Sponsor, this season Phil spent hundreds of hours painting the Visitors Center, he led the campus decoration efforts for Pumpkin Patch Trolley, created lesson plans and other resources to accompany his Elegant Ride book that are now available online, and much much more. Thank you Phil!

Additional volunteers that were recognized for their hard work behind-the-scenes this season were Tom LaRoche, Roger Tobin, Sue Ellen Stavrand, Rich Coots, Rich Pascucci, and the Track Department and everyone that volunteered on the Track Crew this season. We also appreciate all of the family members of the volunteers who supported the
Museum on campus this season, and supporting their continued participation and increased risk by being on campus during a pandemic.

The Roger E. Somers Legacy Award is given to a Railway Operations volunteer who exemplifies the qualities that Roger Somers demonstrated in his work for the museum—including his unwavering passion to live our mission, his positive spirit, his genuine desire to mentor others, and the servant leadership he showed everyone at the museum, every single day. Nominations are solicited among all volunteers, and the winner is selected by the senior Railway Operations leadership team.

The recipient of this year’s Somers Award is John Mercurio. Congratulations John! His nominator had the following to say: “John Mercurio epitomizes what is the best in operations at Seashore. As an operator for over twenty years, John is an integral member of the crew as a dispatcher throughout the season. John is a gentleman in every sense of the word. It is because of his steady and respectful demeanor that several operators will only work on those days when he mans the dispatcher’s desk. Over the years he has served as a role model and mentor to several new STM operators. His enthusiasm is only surpassed by his concern for the safety of both STM passengers and volunteers. His decision and actions are always carefully thought out and, without a doubt, he has earned the trust of those who work with him. He arrives early and stays late on a consistent basis. He takes responsibilities seriously and always can be counted upon to go above and beyond. Of all of the STM operators, I can think of no one more deserving of John Mercurio for this very special award.”

Additional volunteers recognized for their dedication to Seashore this season by the Operations Team were Donald Stephenson, Steve Cappers, and Douglas Carrier, Sr.

Our top 100 mission-critical volunteers and donors that directly supported the museum during the pandemic and helped us continue to remain open for guest operations this season will be receiving a special "Pandemic Hero" pin when they return to campus in 2021, as a token of our appreciation.

Following the program, Jim Schantz led a fun Trolley Trivia game, through photos he’s taken on his travels to other countries over the years. We know more Seashore members have photos like Jim, and we think it would be great to offer Zoom nights during the off season where members could get together virtually and share photos or presentations. If you are interested in showcasing your photos, please email Katie to let her know!

Seashore Wheeling Presentation -

Seashore Trolley Museum is co-hosting with the Ohio County Public Library, a virtual presentation titled "The Last of the Wheeling Trolleys," on Thursday, January 7 at 6:30PM. If this is of interest to you further information from the Ohio County Public Library about their
new exhibit and information to join the presentation is included at the end of this issue of The Main Line.

Appreciation to Everyone - Reflecting on the above - we all owe profound thanks to Katie Orlando, Jim Schantz, the trustees, staff, and volunteers for all of the extraordinary effort they put forward in 2020 to keep our museum moving forward! .. Ed.

Do You Recognize?

Last Month’s Do You Recognize -

Our railroad of interest last month got its start with the incorporation of a Halifax City Railroad by William D. O’Brien, a local entrepreneur, in 1863. The impetus for this construction was the earlier (1854 - 1858) construction of a government-built railway to link Halifax, Nova Scotia, the regional capital, with other other communities. Unfortunately, apparently driven by an attack of ill advised parsimony, it was determined to build the railway terminus some three miles from the center of the city. The connecting roadways were unpaved mud wallows on a good day and local cabmen happily charged exorbitant fares to cover this distance. Many less fortunate rail travelers simply had to slog the distance on foot.

The 1863 incorporation did not bring immediate relief as most of the area merchants, the likely investors, had their money invested in operating blockade runners trading with the Confederate States during the Civil War. The surrender of the Army of Northern Virginia in April of 1865 followed by the remaining major military units of the Confederacy and the capture of Confederate President Davis in May put an end to the blockade running business and its high profits.

In 1866 as investment monies became available construction was started from the somewhat remote railway station into the city proper including a combined stable and carbarn. This initial development was apparently broad gauge (5’ 6”) as a locomotive for the local steam railroad (The Nova Scotia Railway) was moved over the City Railroad’s rails. On June 11 of that year an official opening of the line took place attended by what the press described as an immense gathering including the band of the 4th Regiment of the Line that garrisoned the city’s citadel, the Lt. Governor, and other dignitaries. Two additional short lines were built in 1869.
Cars ran a weekday headway of 15 minutes between 6AM and 10 PM. With the acquisition of larger cars in 1874 service was increased to every 10 minutes between 10AM and 8PM.

In 1876 a decision was made by the government-owned steam road to extend closer to the city center including the construction of a new station. This required building over part of the routes of our City Railroad. The steam road offered to pay all expenses of moving the city railroad’s track to an adjacent street. The owner refused and abruptly in mid-May 1876 shut down the line and shortly thereafter sold his, cars, horses, and rails. For the next decade local transportation was by private carriage, on foot, or a minimal omnibus service.

By the middle 1880s the idea of streetcars propelled by electricity was being discussed and a group of prominent citizens obtained a charter in mid-April 1884 for an electric railway line. Obtaining a charter is one thing and obtaining investors yet another. The new company named the Halifax Railway Company made no progress. In 1886 yet another company, the Halifax Street Railway was formed to build a horse-powered street railway. A charter was obtained in early May 1886 and at the end of that month the rights of the previous Halifax Railway Company were transferred to the new Halifax Street Railway. Fifteen cars were purchased from the John Stephenson Company and the former Railroad Company’s buildings were purchased for a stable and car barn. An existing omnibus company was purchased to eliminate competition. The new line officially opened on October 21, 1886 with a large crowd, speeches, and a luncheon reminiscent of the opening of the City Railroad twenty years before. A new branch was built to reach major hotels and businesses. New suburbs were growing to the northwest and equipment of the old omnibus company was used to provide service. This proved unsatisfactory and although the Street Railway began laying new track to service the area financial difficulties intervened.
In 1889 yet another company emerged - this time a Power Company chartered to produce and sell electrical power and also to acquire and electrify the Street Railway. In 1891 the new Nova Scotia Power Company completed the new branch started in 1886 but for lack of capital made no effort to electrify any of the lines. By 1893 the branch originally built in 1886 to reach the major hotels and businesses had to be discontinued with the above 1891 branch also had to close in 1895.

Some stability came to the scene with the incorporation of the Halifax Electric Tramway Company in March of 1895. The new and, for a change, well capitalized firm purchased the bankrupt Halifax Street Railway and the Nova Scotia Power Company. Also acquired was an Halifax Illuminating And Motor Company that had a powerhouse. The new Halifax Electric Tramway Company had both capital and power generating capacity to finally electrify the system. A new thirty-car car barn was constructed with connections to the existing track of the old Street Railway. Fourteen closed cars and twelve opens were ordered from Rhodes, Curry & Company of Amherst, NS with another six closed and two opens acquired later from the same firm. Trucks, motors and electrical equipment were swapped between open and closed cars for the first couple of years and then it was decided impractical and additional trucks, etc. were acquired. Additional new and second-hand cars were acquired from several manufacturers including the Ottawa Car Company, Silliker Car Co. of Halifax, its successor the Nova Scotia Car Works, and J.G. Brill through 1919.

The first two cars arrived on February 3, 1896 and a demonstration run was made on the 12th of the same month. Initially the electrics only ran on a portion of the line as the old horse line track was still being replaced with heavier rail. A new route was opened in early
May and by the end of the month the entire system had been rebuilt. May 31, 1896 saw the operation of the last horse car. Expansion of routes and adding to existing infrastructure went on through the outbreak of the First World War with a new forty-two car car barn being added in 1916.

In early 1917 the company was reorganized and the name changed to the Nova Scotia Tramway and Power Company.

December of 1917 saw a massive tragedy befall the city, its citizens, and the tramway. A collision in the city’s port resulted in a massive explosion and subsequent fire. Over 25 percent of the city’s population was killed or injured. The tramway had about a fifth of its closed fleet damaged with two cars totally demolished (nothing found but the trucks). A great deal of the company’s poles and overhead were also destroyed. Rebuilding of the lines was hindered by the devastation to both property and workers. The north end of the city was so totally destroyed that portions of the tram system in that area were never restored. For perspective the explosion resulted in ten-times the number of deaths and over double the injuries as this year’s huge ammonium nitrate explosion in Beirut. Halifax having one sixth the population in 1917 as Beirut does today.

The year 1919 saw wartime activity ended and the company left with a badly worn system including a number of cars damaged in the explosion and only having received minimal repairs. The year 1919 also saw a controlling interest in the company purchased by Stone & Webster. This controlling interest was held until 1924 when the controlling interest was sold to Royal Securities Corporation, a brokerage firm headquartered in Halifax. Subsequently the brokerage house sold shares in the company to the public at large.

Beginning with a 1920 purchase of 24 new Birneys from American Car Company our line went to 100% Birney for future acquisitions with most of the earlier cars scrapped or sold by 1927 other than a few converted to work or sand cars. The 1920 purchase from American was also the last acquisition of new cars with a total of 84 Birneys in the fleet. One slight
oddity in the career of the first 24 Birneys was that in 1924 the rules of the road changed
from left-side to right-side and these cars required extensive conversion as their steps were
suddenly in the wrong place. The older cars mostly had steps on both sides and were easier
conversions.

In 1926 there was an extensive rehabilitation of old track-work and overhead. by the end of 1927 the
infrastructure work was complete and the Birney fleet at full strength so the older
cars could be scrapped.

World War II arrived in 1939 and the city’s prewar population of around 60,000
jumped to 120,000 by 1941 and ridership jumped from the normal nine million riders
to an astonishing thirty one million. The pre-war fleet of 59 Birneys was crushed by
this demand and the company added

another 23 as quickly as possible with still intense crowding.

At war’s end the company found itself with a worn out fleet, rails, and overhead. New or
good used cars were almost non-existent and it was ultimately decided to scrap the trolley
system. The last Birney in revenue service operated on March 26, 1949.

With motor buses used to fill the gap while the overhead was reworked the system was converted with 65 new
trolley buses. The population leveled off at about 100,000 but demand remained high with 28 million riders by
1952 and 12 more trolley buses were added with a total of 87 ultimately operated. Trolleybus service was
supplemented with motor buses starting in 1963. Ridership was declining and street congestion worsening during the 1960s and the
decision was made to replace the trolleybuses. On January 1, 1970
trolley bus service ended in favor of diesel buses and on the same date the city government took over the transit routes. Metro
Transit, a regional metropolitan transit agency, was established in 1981 to serve the city and
surrounding communities.
For those seeking more information there is a good article in 
 Canadian Railroad Historical Association Incorporated. 
 Bulletin 17 
 Montreal, April 15, 1954.

This Month’s Do You Recognize -

Our line of interest was established the most populous city in the county. The city was once 
the hub of the United States’ “gage” making industry, with over two hundred manufacturers in 
it and an adjacent city, employing nearly 80 percent of the residents.

The Electric Railroad was built at the southern edge 
of the local mountain range and was opened for 
service on August 23, 1901. It ran for 4.35 miles, 
single track, up a small mountain (1,417 ft el.) to the 
hotel and resort area at a Lake on the mountain 
top. There were initially three single truck open cars 
and one single truck combination car, as well as a 
service car running over the 56 lb. rails. Some 
accounts indicate that this was to total ever owned 
by the company but news coverage at the time of 
the 1902 accident (see following) 
indicate that five cars were in service. 
The president of the line had also been 
quoted in the Street Railway Journal as 
intending to acquire two additional cars. 
There were 3.6 miles of track on private 
right-of-way thru uninhabited land with 
an almost continuous grade, reaching a 
maximum of 11.5%, and rarely less 
than 8% and considered somewhat 
dangerous. Cars ran only in summer at 
a round - trip fare of 25¢. The sole 
source of traffic was intended to be 
vacationers and sightseers wishing to 
reach the mountaintop and the hotel 
located in the resort area. The railway did not own the resort although there was overlapping 
ownership.
On July 4th, 1902, less than a year after opening, heavily loaded combine car #5 descending the mountain ran away and overtook a preceding open car #1, also heavily loaded, striking it and pushing it ahead until ultimately overturning the open on an S-curve. This resulted in the deaths of 14 (12 passengers and 2 crew) and injury to another 60 persons. A subsequent state railroad commission investigation found the electric railway had placed inexperienced and inadequately trained personnel in charge of operating the cars. Damage claims bankrupted the railway and in 1903 it was reorganized and renamed a Traction Company. The new line was never able to totally escape the crash history in the public's memory.

A much larger electric railroad served the origin community although no connection was initially made between the two lines’ trackage. After our railroad’s reorganization to Traction Company the larger line soon acquired a controlling interest. Track was eventually connected and by 1911 there appears to have been through service between the lines although the Traction Company was never absorbed into the larger line.

Good fortune was something somewhat foreign to the line. In August 1908 lightning struck the hotel on the mountain and the resulting fire totally destroyed the building. The hotel was not rebuilt and the electric line was left with day-trippers going to the park and residents of houses that were being built on the mountain. By the Summer of 1917 roads had improved and people were becoming accustomed to using their motorcars rather than riding the electrics. That season proved to be the last and the Traction Company ceased operation on September 20, 1917 and was sold for scrap.
A Library Committee meeting was held through Zoom on November 7, 2020.

The next Library Committee meeting will be held through a virtual Zoom meeting on January 9, 2020 at 10 AM. Materials and login information will be distributed.

Our community partner York County Community College is entered 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 still 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

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_blueprints/
https://digitalmaine.com/trolley_images/
https://digitalmaine.com/trolley_documents/

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

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.

Something a Bit Different - A double-decked trolley for Boston!

In 1891 the Pullman Company built two center vestibule double deck electric cars making use of patent by E.C. Sessions of Oakland, CA - hence these were Pullman-Sessions cars. The patent related to the manner of seating on the upper level with four helical stairways around an open center vestibule. Seating was available for 80 with a total capacity of 160. A 33’8” demonstrator was shipped to the West End Street Railway in November 1891 for testing. West End had indicated it was ordering four such double deckers. The demonstrator ran between Boston and Cambridge for some 40 days. The public was fascinated with this vehicle and some one-way trips were reported to have carried upwards of 220 passengers. For all of its popularity with riders the demonstrator was returned to Pullman-Sessions, the order for four cars cancelled, and that was the end of Boston’s romance with the double-deck trolley. Pullman-Sessions sold the car to Louisville Terminal Railway a year later.
A quite striking vehicle in visual design. The overall form would have been as much at home passing by as a lake steamer. Apparently West End lost interest due to the slow loading and unloading characteristics.

Regards,

Ed Ramsdell, Editor
The Main Line
TheMainLine@ramsdell.com   http://www.trolleymuseum.org
The Seashore Trolley Museum in Kennebunkport Maine is home to a very special car. No. 639 is a Cincinnati curved-side built in 1924 for the Wheeling Traction Company, later Co-Operative Transit Company. It is one of few survivors of hundreds of curved-side cars and is the last known Wheeling trolley in existence. The body was acquired in 1957 and a decadeslong restoration process followed. Now, #639 is fully restored and in operating condition at the museum.
James D. Schantz and Frederick J. Maloney, editors of the book on the subject (see below), will tell us about this unique trolley car and the amazing, epic restoration process, including the importance of the photos of Bill Gwinn, whose work is now on exhibit at the Ohio County Public Library.

This program will be available to watch live on Facebook Live, on YouTube, and on the OCPL website's People's U Livestream page. Log into your Facebook or YouTube account during the program to leave questions for James and Frederick in the comments box. They will answer them during the live broadcast.

Happy New Year
2021