Goings On at Seashore -

The Museum did successfully get through the first pandemic year and appreciates everyone so much for their support during this difficult time.

“Pandemic Hero” pins were awarded to Sue Ellen Stavrand, Bill Catanesye, Arthur Morin, Jim Mackell, Scott Roberts, Connie Garland, Randy Leclair, Brian Tenaglia, Sherri Alcock, Jim Schantz, Seth Reed, David Rogers, Donald Frost and Mike Frost for their hard work, dedication and commitment to the Museum during the 2020 season.

There have been some material successes in 2020 including the acquisition of diesel locomotive 150, a bucket truck, a crane truck, a mobility lift, preparation of the first floor of Tower C as a display area, and the visitors’ center exterior painting and landscaping.

Work continues on the Bus Display Area; the temperature is finally dipping consistently below freezing and it will soon be at a stopping point until the spring, but it was possible to put in 7 weeks of work into this project so far during the off season.

Work also continues tin the Restoration Shop on the Narcissus and Lexington & Boston 41. The shop has recruited new volunteers to support the work on 41.

Seashore is attempting to launch its first official YouTube Channel during the off season so it’s in full swing by Opening Day in 2021. Once we hit 100 subscribers, we will be able to brand and customize the channel to best meet our needs, so we encourage everyone who uses this social media network to subscribe to help us get to this number soon! Right now, the channel can be accessed here: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCuOtSXvFaKCr_4_CRdvk2A

The museum’s COVID-19 policies continue to be updated and are posted at https://trolleymuseum.org/learn/bylaws-policies/covid-19-policies/ All volunteers who have been cleared to visit by our Executive Director and are planning to visit campus must review these policies prior to visiting. Volunteers must continue to communicate with our Executive Director prior to arriving on campus for contact tracing purposes as required by the state, and as a condition of the state and federal pandemic relief funding we have received.

Above material is excerpted in part from previously published museum updates.
Do You Recognize?

Last Month’s Do You Recognize -

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

The Mountain Lake Electric Railroad was built at the southern edge of the Adirondack Mountains and was opened for service on August 23, 1901. It ran for 4.35 miles, single track, up Bleeker Mountain (1,417 ft el.) to the hotel and resort area at Mountain 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 the 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.

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 traction company 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 Adirondack Lakes' Traction Company ceased operation on September 20, 1917 and was sold for scrap.

For those interested in additional information the website of the Fulton County Historical Society (https://fultoncountyhistoricalsociety.org) has information and images.
This month’s electric railway was incorporated in 1902 with the intent of operating an interurban service between its two namesake terminal cities. Total track was just under 20 miles with 12.8 miles of interurban and just over 5.5 miles of town lines plus yard and other track. The interurban was all private right-of-way with a width of 40 feet between the city limits of the endpoint cities. The railway paralleled a river and the existing highway connecting the two city endpoints. In 1920 a paved highway was constructed between the two cities paralleling the railway. This short stretch of highway was part of one of the earliest transcontinental highway routes across the United States.

Support for the proposed railway came from a businessman in an adjoining state who was associated closely with the electric utility boom under Thomas Edison. He worked closely with Thomas A. Edison and consequently became one of that small group known as Edison Pioneers. This involvement with electricity led him into the street railway business and, at one time, to acquire a controlling interest in the St. Louis Car Company as well as many other transport ventures. A second prime supporter of the railway was an experienced electric railway promoter.

The westerly endpoint city, where the railway’s main offices were initially located, gave the line a 50 year franchise. Another railway had done construction in this city in the late 1880s including laying track within the city and also ordering four cars from the Pullman Palace Car Co. By 1890 this firm was ordered to remove its rails etc. and ultimately was sold at a Sheriff’s sale in 1894.

The easterly endpoint city initially awarded a 20 year franchise and in 1912 it was extended to February 1960. This second city had a number of companies incorporated and franchises awarded for railways to build various routes from the city. None of these came to fruition other than our line. The company offices moved here in 1907. This city was also the boyhood home of a 20th century U.S. president.

Work on the interurban began in 1902 and the track was completed in late 1903 but a dispute with a steam road concerning crossing the right-of-way held up completion. Overhead was strung as track was laid so as to use electric cars during the construction but this was not totally successful and second-hand American type steam engine was acquired for the work. Interurban service finally began with a special car full of dignitaries being operated in the second week of May 1904, a special
chartered car by a national fraternal organization ran some two weeks later, and regular service began on May 26, 1904 using four new cars (#21 - #24) from the St. Louis Car Company. Four double-truck trailers (#33-36) were added in 1906-07 and a new interurban (#104) came from McGuire-Cummings in 1912.

There was a competing steam road between the terminal cities but its smokey and relatively infrequent service offered no real competition to the fast and clean hourly service offered by our railway. In 1913, with a well maintained infrastructure, running time on the electrics was reduced to 45 minutes. In 1920 the running time between the downtown terminals returned to one hour.

The interurban profited from some temperance-driven instability in the endpoint cities. Repeated local elections kept the cities’ status as dry or wet in flux. Every time that one or other endpoint went dry and the other wet the railway could expect a surge of business, perhaps a little intoxicated on the return trips, but good business!

City operations were set up in both endpoint cities with service starting in mid-May 1904. The local lighting company had built a park in the easterly endpoint city that included a bandstand, dance pavilion, and dining hall. Our railway eventually took over the park to promote ridership. The westerly city also received its own park with a fairgrounds and race track. A spur and a 2,000 ft. siding were provided but the park and its service only lasted a few years as the park proved unprofitable. City services were inaugurated with second-hand Pullman-manufactured city cars (#11-15) from a railway in a neighboring state headed by one of the developers of our railway. Two more cars (#16-17) were purchased second-hand from the
same original owner in 1906. Two second-hand single truck open trailers were also purchased in 1904. In 1909 four new city cars (#25-28) were purchased new from the St. Louis Car Company with older city cars (#11-16) being scrapped shortly thereafter.

Another new city car (#31) was acquired from McGuire-Cummings in 1912 but it unfortunately had excessively high steps for city operations especially considering women’s fashions of the day. In 1922 as the line’s end neared two new Cincinnati Car Company Birneys (#32-33) were acquired. It appears that these were both assigned to city operations in the western endpoint city.

Freight service was never a major component. A box motor handled baggage and freight. There was some milk business and mail pouches. Of course I suppose the infamous gravel business would fall under freight. An express motor (#94) by St. Louis Car Co. was acquired second hand in 1904. Freight motor #30 came new in 1912, another McGuire-Cummings product, also serving as a sweeper and a plow. No. #30 replaced the 1896 St. Louis express motor.
In 1911 the original investor group sold their interests in the railway and associated power companies to Samuel Insull. Insull believed in dependable service in his systems and planned for such. However, the depression destroyed his empire with our line not even surviving until the collapse of his empire in the depths of 1929. By 1917 revenues were declining and with the completion of the paved highway between the endpoint cities revenues imploded. A striking irony in the construction of the paved highway was that the railway sold and transported to contractors much of the gravel and fill used in the construction of the paved highway and surrounding roads that precipitated the line’s downfall.

The advent of the paved road in 1920 brought the onset of a rapid decline in traffic. In 1924 the line carried just over 339,000 passengers with less than 25 percent of these being patrons of the interurban and the rest being city service patrons in the terminal cities. This compared with over 891,000 patrons in 1911-12, an over 60 percent decline in traffic. The interurban fare had increased from 25¢ to 30¢ in 1910. By 1925 the interurban was operating a two hour headway. City fares were specified at 5¢ in the original franchises, these were increased to 8¢ in 1920.

The line’s fiscal condition was uniformly poor. Out of 21 years it experienced a deficit in 12 of them, not even covering operating costs in the last 4 years. The line was kept in good repair and was well run thanks to its being part of the Insull empire from 1918 onward but it never paid a dividend nor covered the costs of its construction.

The end came fairly quickly in 1925. In July 1925, faced with soaring costs and plummeting ridership, the company applied to the state commerce commission to abandon the line. September 1925 saw the abandonment approved and after notice to the public actual operations ceased on October 5, 1925. The railway retained the right-of-way for its commercial electric transmission lines.
A Library Committee meeting was held through Zoom on January 9, 2021.

The next Library Committee meeting will be held through a virtual Zoom meeting on March 13, 2021 at 10 AM. Materials and login information will be distributed.

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

Facebook page = 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

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.


South Station - 1905
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, Ed Ramsdell, Editor The Main Line

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http://www.trolleymuseum.org