The NEERHS Annual Meeting was held on 24 April via Zoom. The following schedule was followed. It was an interesting series of presentations and as a personal comment - it is no mean feat to keep five hours of Zoom interesting - Congratulations to all involved.

9:00AM: Zoom Meeting Room Opened for Social Half Hour
9:30AM-11:00AM: New Direction Roundtable: The Narcissus Restoration Project, Phil Morse - The Liberty Bell 1030 Restoration Project, Tom & Ron Ruddell and the New Bus Display Area, Katie Orlando.
11:00AM: Business Meeting Called to Order
11:15AM-1:00PM: Proxy Committee finalized votes for Trustees. All votes by our member shareholders in good standing cast via mail and online.
11:15AM-12:30PM: Administrative Officer & Department Reports
  • Museum Administration, Jim Schantz & Katie Orlando
  • Restoration Shop, Dave Rogers
  • Track Department, James van Bokkelen
  • Yard Operations, Jeff Bennett
  • Overhead Infrastructure, Rob Drye
  • Bus & Trackless Trolley Department, Charlie Sullivan
  • Curatorial Updates, Katie Orlando
  • Seashore Railway Operations, Tom LaRoche
1PM-1:45PM: New Direction Project Update: Project Sponsors & Managers. Updates from the New Direction Strategic Plan champions.
1:45PM: Trustee Election Results Announced-

Confirmed as an Appointed Trustee: Sue Ellen Stavrand

Two Trustees Elected From Four Candidates.

Karen Dooks was elected and Peter Wilson was re-elected

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Board of Trustees -

Karen Dooks       Robert C. Drye        Chester Gabriel       Robert Grindrod
John Grube        James J. Mackell      Peter Osgood          Michael Peters
James D. Schantz  Sue Ellen Stavrand  James B. Van Bokkelen  Peter Wilson

2:00PM-2:30PM: Meeting of the Board of Trustees: Electing and Appointing 2021 Officers:

Corporate Officers

Robert C. Drye, Chair                  Sue Ellen Stavrand, Vice Chair
James D. Schantz, President & CEO (and Chairman Emeritus)
James van Bokkelen, Vice President    Thomas LaRoche, Immediate Past Chair
Cecilia B. Clapp, Corporate Secretary  Charles R. Sullivan, Treasurer
David C. Johnson, Esq., General Counsel & Clerk of Corporation
The Coral Gables Rapid Transit System and the city of Coral Gables, Fl were the brainchild of entrepreneur / real estate developer George Merrick. In 1898 at the age of twelve this “father” of the city and its the Coral Gables Rapid Transit Corporation moved with his parents from Duxbury, MA to the area where he would later create the city and a traction system. After graduating college he had moved away in 1908 to study law at the New York Law School. With his father’s illness and subsequent death in 1911 our entrepreneur returned home to run his father’s large fruit and vegetable plantation with some 1,000 acres in production. Upon his return he worked in developing several areas of Miami. By 1916 he had begun work on developing the totally planned community of Coral Gables on 3,000 acres inherited from his father, a Congregational minister and agricultural entrepreneur, with actual construction of the development starting in 1921. In 1925 his new development had a population of about 6,000 when incorporated as the city of Coral Gables, today it stands at around 50,000. The community eventually encompassed 10,000 acres. He envisioned this development as a major part of Miami and in 1925 he was actually quite disappointed when the community voted to become a separate city although his disappointment didn’t stop him from immediately becoming a city commissioner.

As well as effectively planning every street, building, and tree (an estimated some 100,000 trees and shrubs) he saw a need for transportation from his planned community to the adjacent larger city (approximately 7 miles). Initially the railway development fell under the Coral Gables Utilities Corporation he had established to oversee the construction of the new community. The railway operation was soon transferred to a new Coral Gables Rapid Transit Corporation that he had also organized. Initially actual operation of the line was contracted...
to the Miami Beach Railway. Shortly thereafter the operation of the line was contracted with the Florida Power And Light Company that had purchased the electric generation/distribution and water systems of the new city of Coral Gables.

Nature intervened towards the end of 1926 with a massive hurricane often referred to as the Miami Hurricane of 1926. Significant damage was done to both Coral Gables and Miami and the Coral Gables Rapid Transit infrastructure. In 1927 the Florida Railroad Commission approved a series of petitions regarding the line. Specifically, the sales of the street railway assets of the above-mentioned Coral Gables Utilities Corporation to the Coral Gables Rapid Transit Corporation and in turn the assets of the Coral Gables Rapid Transit Corporation to the Municipal Transit System of Coral Gables. The Coral Gables Municipal Transit System provided both trolley (9 years) and later bus service until 1975.

There were two main lines connecting our new city with the large adjacent city. The first of these, the local line, was a somewhat slow route for end to end travel and a faster "interurban line" was constructed to improve service. Two additional east-west lines were constructed during the decade of our company’s operation but both failed to generate sufficient traffic to operate for very long. Both the local and interurban lines continued until nature struck the second major blow in a decade, this time fatal.
On Labor Day evening of 1935 an unnamed hurricane, the second major hurricane of the season, made landfall. By the time it had passed Coral Gables and Miami had suffered tremendous damage and the railway had turned its last electric powered wheel. The railway infrastructure of the Coral Gables Municipal Transit System was heavily damaged including the destruction of almost all of its overhead wire. Trucks were eventually used to tow stranded cars off of the line.

The ten-year old city was nearly bankrupt from the ravages of the Great Depression and in no condition to fund the massive repairs that were required. The city commissioners threw in the proverbial towel and the railway was no more. Buses operated by the Coral Gables Municipal Transit System took over the service. Any remaining Brill cars were sold to the adjacent large city’s municipal line while the ten St. Louis Car Company products proved unsalable as trolleys due to severe rusting and they moved on to the ultimate fate of many streetcars - that of storage shed, chicken coop and a liquor store.

Rolling stock had come from J.G. Brill and the St. Louis Car Company. An initial five 28 ft. single-truck Birneys (101-105) were ordered by the Utilities Company from Brill in 1924 and delivered in 1925, three 28 ft. single truck Birneys (106-108) were ordered from Brill (Built by American) in 1925, and two 40 ft. double truck closed cars (109 - 110) were ordered from Brill in 1925 and built by American Car Co. Ten Nine 47 ft. double-truck cars (1-10) (2-10) were ordered from the St. Louis Car Company in late 1925 with a 1926 delivery. The # 1-10 were derived from two articles without source references. The index compiled by Alan R. Lind, from St. Louis records and published in “From Horsecars to Streamliners : An Illustrated history of the...
St. Louis Car Company” indicates there were 9 cars in the order (nos. 2-10) - my thanks to Paul Schneble for pointing this out to me. These cars were described as “de luxe, double end, one-man, two-man city and suburban cars” in a St. Louis Car Co. ad.

The three Brill double truck Birneys were sold the Miami’s municipal line in 1928. The remaining single truck Brill Birneys (101-108) also went to Miami (circa 1933 - 1936). The St. Louis Car Company closed cars were all on the property when the end came in 1935. Because of severe rusting problems none were sold as operating trolleys but ended up in the general area as storage sheds, chicken coops, one a liquor store, and the like.

End of the line - the yard in 1936 with St. Louis cars stored to the right (#8 center and #5 right) with an unknown Brill Birney at the left.

This Month’s Do You Recognize -

Our line of interest this month was a holding company that operated city streetcar service in its home city after which it is named and interurban services to the west, north, and east of the home city.

The formation of the Interurban was somewhat contorted to say the least. In 1901 a 14-mile electric railway company was opened between its two namesake

Interurban No. 101 - Niles Car Co. (c. 1902)
Departing its home city for the eastern end of the Interurban

No. 717 - G.C. Kuhlman Car Co. - 1903
Originally built for a predecessor line - probably its No. 9 (9-11 became 717,719,721)
cities and eventually becoming the eastern branch of our railway. Another railway, power & light co., named after what would be the home city of our railway, was formed by the merger of street railways harking back to 1880's mule-car operation. The two companies were under common ownership and management. The railways were merged in August 1902 with the final name of our line (city name & Interurban) adopted in September 1902.

The management group formed another line in 1901 which commenced operation in April of 1904 becoming the western branch of our line. An independent company, still with some connections to the management company, was formed in 1900 and began operations out of our line’s home city in 1902 over a 34-mile line that became our line’s northern branch. In 1906 this “independent” northern line was sold to our line, the “Interurban”. Further corporate changes kept coming with our line being acquired in 1909 by a new company formed by E. W. Clark & Company of Philadelphia and Hodenpyl, Walbridge & Company, New York. In 1911 the city streetcar operations in the Interurban’s home city was devolved to a new local traction company for the purposes of being able to more easily funnel dividends into the parent company.

As early as 1917 motorized competition started to evidence itself as a highway named after a Civil War General and later President paralleled portions of the western branch of the Interurban and became one of the first highways in the region to be paved.
The year 1922 brought a financial reorganization with a debt payment default resulting in bankruptcy in October 1925. A new Public Service Company was organized in 1926 for the city operation. Motorized competition began to be significantly felt and corporate maneuvering in the form of reorganization was begun to stave off reality. The city traction operation and the three branches of our interurban were sold to separate companies with separate financial receivers. In October 1927 the eastern branch of the interurban was sold to a new company that merged the branch and an electric it had connected with at the easterly end of the branch. This new company failed in less than three years and ended service in March 1930. The Interurban’s northern branch was cut back 13 miles in July of 1929.

By 1930 passenger traffic had dropped ninety percent from the heyday year of 1919. Our Interurban officially ended in September 1930, that being one day before the bonded indebtedness payment was due. The rail was not lifted for over a year because of the depressed value of scrap as a result of the Great Depression.

City streetcar service ended in mid-1936, trolley bus service hung on until 1948, and bus operations were maintained until 1953 when they were sold to transit subsidiary of a major regional railroad.
The next Library Committee meeting will be held through a virtual Zoom meeting on May 8, 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/
Absolutely Miscellaneous -

The Laconia & Lake Village Horse Railroad

A search for some material led me to an email that O.R. Cummings sent to me in February 2012 noting that all the initial rolling stock of the Laconia & Lake Village Horse Railroad in 1882 was built by the Abbot-Downing Company of Concord, N.H., producer of the famous Concord stagecoaches. This led me to an undated manuscript entitled “Laconia Streetcar Days” by O.R. Cummings. The manuscript, unpublished to my knowledge, details streetcars in Laconia from horsecars through the electrics. I thought a piece of the manuscript - the story of the Laconia & Lake Village Horse Railroad might be of interest.

LACONIA STREETCAR DAYS

By

O. R. CUMMINGS, Historian
105 Theresa Court
Manchester, NH 03103-6693

Chapter One

HORSECARS TO PAUGUS BAY

1882-1898

Streetcars drawn by horses were introduced in Manchester, the Granite State’s largest city, in September 1877 and early in 1881 four Laconia men, Albert G. Folsom, Jotham P. Hutchinson, James H. Tilton and Richard Gove, decided that the time had come to provide similar local public transportation in Laconia, then a rapidly growing town with a population approaching 4,000, and adjoining Lake Village. Suiting action to the thought, they organized the appropriately named Laconia & Lake Village Horse Railroad and applied to the state legislature for a corporate charter for the new company. This was granted July 27 of that
year, the act of incorporation authorizing the L&LV to "construct, use and maintain a railroad with convenient single or double track from any point on Main Street or Court Street in Laconia, over, along and upon such of the streets in Laconia or Gilford as may be necessary for the public accommodation, to Lake Village in Gilford, with branches and side tracks to other parts of said towns . . ."

After financial arrangements had been completed and locations obtained from the selectmen of Laconia and Gilford, construction of a little more than two miles of three-foot gauge track was started. This began at the Willard Hotel on the east side of South Main Street, almost immediately south of Union Avenue, in Laconia and extended northwesterly up South Main and Main Streets to and across the Winnipesaukee River to Bank Square and in the center of Main Street to Church Street. It continued northeasterly on Church Street, crossing the Winnipesaukee River again, to the present Union Avenue and then in a generally north northeasterly course on outer Union Avenue to the Gilford boundary. From this point it continued on Main Street (now part of Union Avenue) in Lake Village to the steamboat wharfs on Paugus Bay. The track was built with iron rails ranging in weight from 25 to 34 pounds per yard.

Rolling stock was ordered in May 1882 from the Abbot-Downing Company of Concord, a firm best known for its production of the famous Concord stagecoach, and a plot of land behind the Willard Hotel was acquired as a site for a carhouse and stable building. This was a wood frame structure about 25 by 50 feet in area but no information about the number of tracks or the quantity of horse stalls can be found. The initial passenger equipment consisted of two four-wheel closed cars with 12-foot bodies, Nos. 1 and 2, and a 7-bench four-wheel open car, No. 5, and these were joined in the fall of that year by two closed sleigh cars, Nos. 3 and 4, which were intended for operation whenever snow and ice conditions on the streets precluded the use of conventional horsecars. Nos. 1 and 2, which were sufficiently small and light to be drawn by one horse, each had two longitudinal seats accommodating 16 passengers, the seating capacity of the open car being 35. Another 7-bench open car, probably No. 6, and a third closed car, No. 7, were built for the L&LV by Abbot-Downing in 1883 and 1884 respectively.

With Nos. 1, 2 and 5 having been delivered and nine horses being on hand, the first trial trip over the Laconia & Lake Village Horse Railroad was made on the afternoon of Friday, August 18. No serious problems were encountered and regular operation began the next day, the first timetable calling for cars to leave the Willard Hotel on weekdays at 5:30, 6, 6:30, 7, 8 and 9 a.m., every 30 minutes until noon and then at 1 p.m. and half-hourly until 9:30. Departures from the hotel on Sundays were at 8, 9, 10 and 11 o'clock in the morning; at 12:30, 2, 3, 4 and 5 o'clock in the afternoon and at 6:30, 7:30 and 8:30 in the evening. (If the weather was inclement on a Sunday, every other trip after 2 p.m. was omitted.) The running time was 30 minutes and the cash fare was six cents, five-cent tickets being available at the Laconia Savings Bank and at A. D. Plummer's in Lake Village.

Reportedly 2,000 passengers were carried the first two days of horsecar service and the number of riders for the first full year of operation, ended Sept. 30, 1883, topped the 156,300 mark. The company owned 2.047 miles of first main track, .111 mile of turnouts and
carhouse tracks, two closed cars, two open cars, two sleigh cars, a barge (open omnibus), a snow plow and 14 horses on that date when Mr. Folsom was president, one W. L. Melcher was treasurer, Mr. Hutchinson was clerk of corporation and Bela S. Keniston was manager. Later identified as superintendent, Keniston still was incumbent as late as June 30, 1895.

Apparently the original charter of the Laconia & Lake Village was legally defective for on July 11, 1883 the legislature enacted Chapter 169 which revived and reenacted the 1881 act of incorporation and legalized the organization of the company, the location grants and the construction of the initial trackage.

The track on South Main Street was extended 470 feet from the Willard Hotel southerly toward Bowman Street in 1884, on December 31 of which the Laconia & Lake Village owned 2.136 miles of main track. There were no further main track changes through 1889 but on Dec. 31, 1888 the company reported ownership of .169 mile of turnouts and carhouse tracks. This reflected the construction in 1887 of a new carhouse and stable complex on the west side of Union Avenue a short distance south of Lyman Street. Both were wood frame buildings connected at the front and the one-story carhouse was about 44 feet wide and 135 feet deep. The adjoining two-story stable was about 40 by 100 feet in area but the number of stalls on the ground floor is unknown. (The second story was used for the storage of hay and feed.) The original carhouse-stable was sold soon after the Union Avenue facilities were opened.

(Other street railways in New Hampshire at the end of 1888, in addition to the Manchester system, were the Concord Horse Railroad (opened in 1881), the Dover Horse Railroad (built in 1882) and the Nashua Street Railway, which had commenced operation in 1886. All had a track gauge of three feet.)

EXTENSIONS

The Laconia & Lake Village reported on June 30, 1890 that 1,948 feet of new track had been built during the year and two years later its annual report stated that another 5,228 feet of new track were in the process of construction. The 1890 work involved the laying of rails from Bank Square northwesterly on Pleasant Street for about 400 feet to what then was known as Depot Street and on Court Street from South Main Street southeast for approximately 1,500 feet toward Pearl Street. The former extension terminated near the old Boston, Concord & Montreal passenger station at the southwest corner of Pleasant and Depot Streets while the latter passed the Belknap County Courthouse, the Wonalancet House (formerly the Laconia Hotel) and the present South Baptist Church.

Filed with Laconia selectmen by the L&LV on March 9, 1892 was a petition asking for the right to build from Pleasant Street through Depot Street to and across Main Street to connect with its existing track on Church Street so that the street railway might serve the new passenger station being constructed by the Concord & Montreal Railroad on the north side of what became known as Depot Square. (The track on Main Street between Bank Square and Church Street was to be abandoned and removed.) There appears to have been no opposition at a public hearing on April 11 and the Laconia Democrat reported on June 6 that
track construction had been started. The first trip was made on Tuesday, July 5, and the Democrat said on July 8 that horsecars were running regularly over the new track and that the rails on Main Street between Bank Square and Church Street "will soon be pulled up."

The target date for the opening of the new depot was July 4, 1892 but it was not until Monday, August 22, that such took place, the formal dedication program including a dinner at the Eagle Hotel in Bank Square, a speaking program at the depot, band concerts and an evening open house. According to the Democrat of August 19, the exterior of the building was of dark pink speckled granite with trimmings of dark red freestone. The new street railway track was immediately south of the porte cochere at the depot's main entrance. Incidentally, once the new depot was open, the wood frame station at Pleasant and Depot Streets was sold to a private party and moved away and the C&M erected a brick freight house on the land.

Shortly after construction of the Depot Street track began, the Laconia & Lake Village petitioned Laconia selectmen on June 15 for locations from Court Street easterly through Pearl Street, past the fairgrounds, to Academy Street; across Academy Street to Lincoln Street; on Lincoln Street to Park Street (now Garfield Street); on Park Street to South Main Street and on South Main to Bowman Street. Again there was no opposition at the required public hearing early in July and the Democrat announced on Friday, August 19 that the new South End loop on the horse railroad had opened two days earlier, with the first car negotiating the circuit at 11 a.m. "You can get a long ride now for five cents and judging from the crowded condition of the cars, our people seem to appreciate this fact."

(By 1892 the cash fare had been reduced from six to five cents and the company sold "operatives" tickets at the rate of 25 for one dollar. These tickets were available to employees of local mills and factories and may have been restricted as to the days and hours of use.)

With the completion of the South End loop and the new track on Depot Street and the removal of the Main Street track between Bank Square and Church Street, the Laconia & Lake Village owned 3.368 miles of main track and .26 mile of sidings and carhouse tracks built with 34-lb. street rails and 25-lb. T rails and as of June 30, 1893 there were five closed and six open horsecars and 29 horses, other equipment including six sleighs, two barges and a snow plow. The same mileages and equipment were reported on June 30, 1898 when the motive power consisted of 31 horses.

(The builder or builders of the two closed cars, Nos. 8 and 11, and four open horsecars acquired after 1884 are uncertain but they could have been constructed by the Laconia Car Company, which had come into being in 1881 as successor to the Ranlet Manufacturing Company, primarily a builder of passenger and freight cars for steam railroads. Large scale production of streetcars was not started until 1894 by the Laconia firm, which was reorganized in 1897 as the Laconia Car Company Works and was again reorganized in 1912 to become the Laconia Car Company once more. The Lake City's largest industry for many years, the car company owned a steadily-growing complex of buildings on both sides of Water Street just a short distance southwest of Pleasant Street.)
(Both Nos. 8 and 11 are believed to have had 16-foot bodies, each with two longitudinal seats accommodating 22 passengers. They normally were drawn by two horses and the interior of each was illuminated at night by oil lamps. Probably coal stoves provided heat during the winter months.)

Coincident with the adoption of a city charter and the annexation of Lakeport by Laconia, the name of the Laconia & Lake Village Horse Railroad was changed by the state legislature (through the passage of Chapter 284) on March 31, 1893 to the Laconia & Lakeport Street Railway, which was authorized to "provide itself with plant and appliances" to supply electricity for motive power, light and heat in Laconia and Gilford; to use and manage boats between Lakeport and points on Lake Winnipesaukee and to discontinue the operation of part of its main line and any branches from time to time with the consent of the Railroad Commissioners." Nearly two years later, on March 13, 1895, by another legislative act, Chapter 225, the Laconia & Lakeport became simply the Laconia Street Railway.

The 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
TheMainLine@ramsdell.com
http://www.trolleymuseum.org
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