Goings On at Seashore —

Firstly the really good news is that Seashore is seeing significantly higher numbers of visitors than in the equivalent period of 2019.

In May, the museum welcomed 1,701 guests; an increase of 56% over the admission numbers in May 2019! The museum enjoyed welcoming back members and volunteers who took last year off due to the pandemic, and look forward to a great 2021 season.

The museum continues to follow all federal and Maine COVID-19 guidelines. Masks are required for all on the trolleys; guests who are not fully vaccinated are encouraged to wear masks campus-wide. The operating trolleys continue to disinfect before and after each ride. Guests have the option to take a physically distanced trolley ride or a non-distanced ride, and the operating crew will board accordingly based on guest preferences.

Check out the museum’s complete external policies at the link below.

https://trolleymuseum.org/.../26/covid-19-policies-updated/

In June, the museum will be open to the general public and operating trolleys on all Wednesdays, Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays from 10AM-5PM. If the admissions numbers continue to be strong this month, it is planned to add a day to the operating schedule in July.

Check out the 2021 Events Calendar on the museum website to see all of the exciting things that are planned for this season!
Do You Recognize?

Last Month’s Do You Recognize -

Our line of interest last month, the Rockford & Interurban Railway, was a holding company that operated city streetcar service in Rockford, IL for which it was named and interurban services: west to Freeport, IL, north to Beloit and Janesville, WI, and east to Belvidere, IL.

The formation of the Interurban was somewhat contorted to say the least. In 1901 a 14-mile electric railway company, the Rockford & Belvidere was opened between its two namesake cities and eventually becoming the eastern branch of our railway. The Rockford Railway, Power & Light Co., 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 (Rockford & Interurban) adopted in September 1902.

The management group formed another line in 1901, the Rockford & Freeport Electric Railway Company, which commenced operation in April of 1904 becoming the western branch of our line. An independent company, the Rockford, Beloit & Janesville, with some connections to the management company, was formed in 1900 and began operations out of Rockford in 1902 over a 34-mile line that became our line’s northern branch. In 1906 this “independent” northern line was sold to the Rockford & Interurban.

Further corporate changes kept coming with our line being acquired in 1909 by the Union Railway Gas & Electric formed by E. W. Clark & Company of Philadelphia and...
Hodenpyl, Walbridge & Company, New York. In 1911 the city streetcar operations in the Rockford was devolved to a new Rockford City Traction Company for the purpose of being able to more easily funnel dividends into the parent company. As early as 1917 motorized competition started to evidence itself as the US Grant Memorial Highway that paralleled portions of the western branch of the Interurban 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. The Rockford Public Service Company was organized in 1926. 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, the Elgin, Belvidere and Rockford 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. The Rockford & 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.

Rockford 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 the Chicago North Shore & Milwaukee Railway Company.

An excellent source of additional detailed information may be found in “The Rockford & Interurban Railway” - First&Fastest - Winter 2005–2006.

This Month’s Do You Recognize -

Our electric railroad of interest this month stretched south some 67 miles from its home city which was also the county seat, state capital, and the state’s largest city. Our line is named for its home city and state although informally known by the name of the promoters. Local citizens had acquired some franchises in 1910-1911 but no real progress was achieved until a new organization financed by mainly eastern money took control in 1912.

The firm of a Boston promoter and financier undertook the financing and construction of the line. This firm had initially incorporated a development company in Portland, Maine in 1905 with the intent of undertaking mining activities in the west. In 1912 the firm undertook the construction of the electric railroad and in October of that year the firm formed a construction company in Portland, ME to build the railroad and also incorporated the railroad in Portland that same month, a year later it was also incorporated in the state where it would operate. The son of the financing firm’s founder served as acting head of the company.

The new firm purchased land for its right-of-way outright, only seeking franchises where the use of public streets through communities was necessary. The franchises also helped in thwarting the establishment of a potential competitive line by regional western interests.

Actual construction began in late 1912 with materials being stockpiled at several points along the proposed route. Construction began in earnest in 1913 with a goal of 53 miles of route by year end. The winter of 1913-1914 was extremely harsh and it is said that the track gangs piled brush in the right-of-way and burned it during the night to attempt to thaw the frozen ground. The railroad’s target date of January 1, 1914 for initiating service was slipped until March by the winter conditions.
The railroad had ordered three gasoline-powered 60 ft. steel rail cars (Nos. 501-503) from Californians Elbert J. Hall and Bert C. Scott (the Hall-Scott Motor Car Company) to provide initial service and for backup after electrification. Completed in January 1914 the three gas-electrics travelled in February the some 800 miles by rail from the Hall-Scott factory.

Using these gas rail cars an initial ceremonial run was made on March 6, 1914 with public service beginning on March 23 over the first 33 miles of completed route. This service was technically operated by the construction company as the railroad did not officially take over until electrification.

Electrification was accomplished with Westinghouse rotary converters converting 45,000 volt 60 cycle current commercially acquired under a 50-year contract to 1500 volts DC. On July 24, 2014 electric railroad service began from the capital to a community some 48.5 miles distant with seven round-trip trains per day. Initial equipment comprised five 61’ 8” steel cars (Nos. 601-605) built by Niles in 1914 along with two 50’ express, baggage and freight motor cars (Nos. 801 & 802), No. 851, resembling 801 and 802 except especially designed to transport milk, and, an electric locomotive (No. 51), also by Niles.

Four additional steel cars (Nos. 606-609) came from Niles in 1916. This same year also saw the delivery of two 60’ steel trailers (701 & 702) and two 60’ steel trailer observation cars (751 & 752). In 1917 the first non-Niles products since the Hall-Scott
gas cars arrived in the form of two 60’ 7” motor passenger cars (610 & 611) by the American Car Company. These two were very similar to the Niles 601-609 series except these had wooden roofs. They were also the only true double-enders with the earlier Niles’ cars rear controls on Hall-Scott Motor Car Company used for backing up the cars.

In May 1915 service increased to 10 round trips per day and in July the line extended a further six miles and a daily except Sunday freight train was added in each direction. May 1916 saw the completion of construction to the final endpoint with 12 round-trips per day over the 66.6 mile route, increased to 13 round-trips in July. During the 1920s between eight and nine round-trips were operated daily. The nadir was reached in 1937 with only five daily round-trips. A 9.7 mile branch was opened in 1917 to a nearby copper mining center with as many as nine round-trips in the beginning and falling to three during the depths of the Depression.

The entire railroad was constructed to steam road standards. It used main line rail of 75 lb. with spurs and sidings laid with 60 lb.

The Interurban was immediately very popular even in it intermediate stages of development. When construction reached a large community some 48 miles from the capital city in 1914 a streetcar line was also laid out within that community. The streetcar line did not succeed in attracting widespread patronage and was curtailed in March of 1919.

The owners of our railroad were associated with a local mining and rail entrepreneur who was a member of the state senate and later governor. Our railroad actually connected with one of his railroads in the state capital and formed a jointly owned terminal company to build an interurban terminal in the capital city. A temporary interurban terminal station was completed in 1916 but the permanent terminal did not open until October 1923.
Between 1916 and 1930 the line bought six Baldwin-Westinghouse electric locomotives (Nos. 101-106). These added to the original No. 51 freight locomotive built by Niles in 1914 and wrecked in 1915. Components were rebuilt by the company shops into No. 52 in 1922. In the early 1920s the line was reported as owning 15 old box cars, 10 new box cars, 50 new gondolas, 20 old gondolas, 4 flat cars, 14 hopper cars, and 2 cabooses.

By the mid-1920s the impact of the automobile and motor truck was starting to be felt in a significant way. In mid-1925 our interurban line slipped into receivership. The line struggled along in a status quo until 1929. In 1929, under a new management team, extensive efforts were made to increase revenues with cars being painted and given the most complete overhauls they had ever received. Unfortunately these efforts were unsuccessful and passenger and freight traffic continued to decline in the long term. In 1937 two court orders instructed the Receiver to sell all properties of the railroad to the highest bidder at a foreclosure sale. This was held on January 26, 1938. The successful bidders were individuals involved in regional banking in the area. A new corporation was again named after the capital city and state, but with “corporation” in the name rather than the earlier “company”. It was initially incorporated in Delaware in late 1936 and in its state of operation in 1938. The successful bidders transferred their interests to the new company in mid-1938. This brought our line under common control with another electric headquartered some 40 miles from the capital city. Our line’s rails were connected with this firm over the railway mentioned previously as owned by the onetime governor.

The new company immediately sought franchises for bus operation over the entire system to block bus competition. Five buses were placed in service with service beginning on January 1, 1939 and in the city with the former streetcar city service in April 1940.

The railroad’s physical plant continued to deteriorate at an increasing rate accompanied by increasing accidents, equipment failure and the like. Eventually in 1945 the line went into receivership again with operations ending on March 1, 1946 by court order. Later in the year the ICC and state utility regulators gave final approval for abandonment. With the company’s demise the local operating authority went to a regional steam railroad’s motor bus subsidiary that was then sold to Continental Trailways in 1948. The local city bus service in the city that briefly had streetcar service in 1914-1919 ended with the railroad’s demise. An attempt to
resuscitate the city service failed in the early-1950s and the possibility of BRT is still currently under discussion.

The next Library Committee meeting will be held, tentatively through a virtual Zoom meeting, on July 10, 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.

Yet Again Absolutely Miscellaneous -

Trolleys To Lake Winnipesaukee

Last month I included a portion of an undated, and to my knowledge unpublished, manuscript entitled “Laconia Streetcar Days” by O.R. Cummings relative to the Laconia & Lake Village Horse Railroad. The following is from chapter two of that same manuscript.

LACONIA STREETCAR DAYS

By O. R. CUMMINGS, Historian

105 Theresa Court

Manchester, NH 03103-6693

Chapter Two

TROLLEYS TO LAKE WINNIPESAUKEE

1899-1925

ON TO THE WEIRS

As approved by Laconia city officials, the Weirs extension of the Laconia Street Railway was to begin on Union Avenue, about two blocks north of Lakeport Square, and parallel the avenue northerly and northwesterly to Bayside Cemetery. The three-foot gauge track was to continue northerly and northwesterly beside Weirs Boulevard to Endicott Street at The Weirs...
and westerly on Endicott Street and across the bridges spanning the Weirs Channel (connecting Lake Winnipesaukee and Paugus Bay) and the Concord & Montreal Railroad to Lakeside Avenue. Running northerly on Lakeside Avenue, the tracks were to pass the New Hotel Weirs, the railroad station and steamboat wharf and the buildings of the N. H. Veterans Association and terminate opposite the Lakeside Hotel and near the entrance to the Methodist campgrounds. There was to be a grade crossing of the Lake Shore branch (later identified as the Lakeport branch) of the Boston & Maine on Union Avenue at Black Brook and because the Weirs channel bridge (built in 1883) was deemed too weak to carry the weight of a fully-loaded electric car, it was to be replaced by a more substantial span. Doubtless the street railway paid part of the cost of the new structure but exactly how much was not revealed in the company’s financial reports.

Permission to effect the grade crossing was granted April 9, 1899 by the Railroad Commissioners who, three days earlier, had authorized the Laconia Street Railway to increase its capital stock by $50,000 (1,000 shares at $50 par) to a total of $100,000 and to issue $91,000 in first mortgage bonds to meet the costs of the original electrification, to pay for the extension to The Weirs and to provide funds for the construction and equipping of a permanent power station in the former stable at the Union Avenue carhouse. The new stock was outstanding on June 30 but the bonds were not listed as a liability until June 30, 1901. Dated May 1, 1899, they were to carry an interest rate of 5 percent and were to mature on May 1, 1919. Interest was payable semi-annually, in May and November, and the American Loan & Trust Company, later the American Trust Company, of Boston was trustee of the mortgage, terms of which called for the establishment of a sinking fund into which $500 was to be deposited annually beginning Nov. 1, 1901.

Construction of the extension commenced as soon as weather and ground conditions permitted in the spring of 1899. Steel T rails weighing 60 pounds per yard were used in constructing the track, which ran along the west side of Union Avenue and Weirs Boulevard all the way from Lakeport to Endicott Street and was very close to the east shore of Paugus Bay at some points. The line was complete as far as the Weirs Channel bridge by May 25 and the Democrat of Friday, May 26, said the street railway management planned to make the first trips over the extension (as far as the track was complete) the next day. The newspaper continued:

"The motive power apparatus has been installed in the power station on Union Avenue and the only break in the route is at the Weirs iron bridge (across the Weirs Channel) which is not completed and will not be for some time yet. Forty minute trips will be run between Lakeport and Weirs for the present, but during the busy season electrics will leave each end of the route every twenty minutes. Four new cars for this road are now being constructed at the Laconia car shops but will be delayed in delivery owing to the non-receipt of motors."

The Democrat added that the old Weirs Channel bridge would be closed that same day for replacement and said foot passengers would be transported across the channel at their own personal risk by the Pittsburgh Bridge Company, which held the contract to build the new steel structure. The four new cars mentioned by the newspaper were of the 13-bench open type, each seating 65 passengers, and were numbered 16 even through 22.
A week later, on June 2, the Democrat reported:

"The extension of the electric railroad to The Weirs was not opened last Saturday but the cars were running the first of this week and are carrying large crowds every day, who are simply delighted with the beautiful ride along the shore of Lake Paugus. The managers of the system . . . are handicapped just now for lack of new cars and are consequently running some of the old horsecars around the (South End) loop as all available electrics are required for the Weirs end of the business during the busy part of the day.

"The Memorial Day business amounted to about 4,000 passengers, which was very good considering that only a few cars were running. Passengers can ride from Laconia to Bayside Cemetery for five cents and from that point to The Weirs for another five-cent fare, making twenty cents for the round trip, which is cheap enough and likely to be a popular price. At present the cars stop at Weirs iron bridge . . . but in a short time the electrics will run through to the campgrounds, more cars will be received and everything running smoothly on regular time over the entire system."

The Democrat of June 9 reported the electrics had done "a thumping big business" the previous Sunday and said many of those making the trip to The Weirs for the first time inquired why a common highway only barely wide enough for two teams to pass was called a boulevard. The newspaper explained that Weirs Boulevard had been laid out to be 70 feet wide but for financial reasons "only one wide enough (26 feet) to accommodate the electrics and make a passable road" had been constructed. "In the future, when Laconia has a surplus in the treasury instead of a big debt, the road to The Weirs will be widened and made a genuine boulevard," the Democrat concluded.

Completion of the new Weirs Channel bridge, across which the street railway laid a single track, was announced on Friday, June 23, by the Democrat, which added that trolleys would be running to the upper end of Lakeside Avenue by "the last of this week." Whether such service was started on Saturday or Sunday was not mentioned in later issues of the newspaper but the Laconia Street Railway reported on June 30 that it had constructed 5.25 miles of new track and erected 8.87 miles of trolley wires and had spent $27,000 on its permanent power station during the previous 12 months. It now owned 8.36 miles of main track and .51 mile of sidings, turnouts and carhouse tracks and its passenger equipment consisted of three closed and six open electric cars and two closed and six open horsecars identified as trailers. (All of the trailers were gone by 1902.) There also were one work car (possibly a four-wheel flat trailer), the snow plow and 16 electric motors and three horses still were on the property. In addition to the grade crossing of the Lake Shore branch, there also was a crossing of a railroad spur track to ice houses on the shore of Paugus Bay in the Black Brook area.

(Turnouts, or sidings which could be entered from either end, were situated on Union Avenue near Gilford Avenue; on Union Avenue near Clark Avenue in Lakeport and on Weirs Boulevard near Langley's Cove on Paugus Bay. There were stub end sidings at the Laconia railroad station, at Bayside Cemetery and at The Weirs railroad station.)
The summer of 1899 was a busy one for the Laconia Street Railway, which petitioned the Railroad Commissioners on September 9 for authority to suspend service between Clark Avenue, Lakeport, and The Weirs from October 1 of that year until May 1, 1900. The petition stated that this approximately four miles of track could not be operated during the seven-month period without great loss to the company. No opposition was voiced at a public hearing in Lakeport on September 25 and the desired authority was granted the same day. Similar petitions were filed annually with the Railroad Commissioners and the successor Public Service Commission and were almost routinely granted through 1924. The fact is that there were very few year round residents at The Weirs during the trolley era and the territory between the resort and Lakeport was so sparsely populated that operating expenses would have greatly exceeded passenger revenues had electric car service in the off seasons been mandated.

PROPOSED LINES

No specific dates were given but the 1902 report of the Railroad Commissioners noted that the Laconia Street Railway had filed a petition with the state Supreme Court (under the provisions of New Hampshire's general street railway law of 1895) seeking authority to construct an approximately 20-mile extension from Laconia southerly through Belmont, Sanbornton, Tilton and Franklin to the Boscawen boundary and a branch from Main Street, Franklin, to Webster Lake at an estimated cost of $250,000. As required by this law, the petition was referred to the commissioners for a determination of convenience and necessity. The Boston & Maine Railroad strongly opposed the petition but its objections on legal grounds effectively were shelved when the commissioners ruled that before any determination that the "public good" required the building of the extension could be made, the street railway would have to file affidavits concerning its financial ability and bona fide intentions to construct the new track. Such affidavits never were filed and the company's petition subsequently was dismissed.

(Earlier, in February 1897, the Street Railway Journal reported that ex-Governor Busiel was promoting several electric railways in the vicinity of Laconia. One was to extend from Laconia to Gilford and the summit of Mt. Belknap; another was to extend from Laconia to Belmont and Gilmanton Corner while a third was to run from either Meredith or Ashland to Center Sandwich, Albany and Conway.)

Strange as it may seem, the building of a horsecar line between Center Harbor on Lake Winnipesaukee and Conway had been proposed three decades earlier by the Center Harbor & Conway Horse Railroad, incorporated by legislative act on June 30, 1865, This was to begin "from a convenient point" near the steamboat landing at Center Harbor and extend to its destination via the towns of Moultonborough, Sandwich, Tamworth and Madison and its charter specified that at least one trip in each direction was to be made daily except Sunday to accommodate passenger travel and the transportation of property. Sufficeth to say, the Center Harbor & Conway never materialized.
STANDARD-GAUGING

The streetcar tracks in Manchester, Concord and Dover all had been converted from three-foot to standard (4 ft. 8 1/2 in.) gauge by the time trolleys began running in the three cities but it was not until 1903 that the Laconia Street Railway management decided to follow suit. Work was started in March and completed around the last of June and at the same time the trucks under the four-wheel passenger cars and the snow plow were changed to the new gauge. The trucks appear to have been rebuilt at the shops of the Laconia Car Company Works, from which five sets of new standard gauge double trucks were purchased.

The railway's report for the year ended June 30, 1903 said $31,922 had been spent for the track regauging, another $4,881 having been expended on altering the cars, and probably these outlays were reflected in the $77,067 in notes and loans payable on that date. Subsequently, on April 4, 1904, the company was authorized by the Railroad Commissioners to issue $40,000 in 6 percent cumulative preferred stock (400 shares at $100 par) and an equal amount in 5 percent second mortgage bonds. All of the new securities were not outstanding until June 30, 1905, however. The new bonds, dated May 1, 1904, were to mature on May 1, 1919 and interest was payable in May and November at the People's National Bank in Laconia. One W. J. Ashman of Laconia was trustee.

Completion of the standard-gauging project marked the end of construction by the Laconia Street Railway and the U. S. Street & Electric Railway Census of 1907 reported that the company's main track and sidings were constructed with T and girder rails ranging in weight from 40 to 60 lbs. per yard. As late as Dec. 31, 1917 there still were 8.36 miles of main track and .51 mile of sidings, turnouts and carhouse tracks.

CARHOUSE AND POWER

The carhouse and stable complex erected on Union Avenue by the Laconia & Lake Village Horse Railroad in 1887 remained active after the Laconia Street Railway was electrified, trolley wires being erected over the four carhouse tracks in the late summer of 1898 and the tracks themselves being widened from three-foot to standard gauge in 1903. All the horse stalls were removed from the stable, the rear third of which became the location of the company's own power station in the spring of 1899.

How many 550-volt direct current generators initially were provided in this station are unknown but the Democrat of June 2, 1899 said they were driven by gasoline engines. These engines apparently were unsatisfactory for during 1900 the street railway erected a one-story boiler house, about 30 by 35 feet in ground area, at the southwest corner of the former stable. This was equipped with two Manning 150 hp boilers which supplied steam to two vertical compound engines. These were belted to three 550-volt direct current generators rated at a total of about 225 kilowatts. Other equipment of the plant included a 250-cell storage battery purchased from the Electric Storage Battery Company of Philadelphia.
The December 1906 issue of the Street Railway Bulletin, monthly periodical of the New England Street Railway Club, reported that control of the Laconia Electric Light Company had been acquired by President Pierce of the Laconia Street Railway, who had purchased the shares of stock held by Albert G. Folsom, Samuel B. Smith and Charles F. Stone. New officers and directors were named immediately after the transaction was complete and not surprisingly Mr. Pierce became president.

(Earlier, in 1905, the Messrs. Pierce, Folsom, Smith, Stone and Edmund Little of Laconia had organized the Laconia Power Company, incorporated by legislative act on March 9. Among other things, the new corporation was authorized to absorb the Laconia Street Railway and also to purchase or lease the property, rights and franchises of or to consolidate with the Franklin Light & Power Company, the Tilton Electric Company, the Laconia Electric Light Company and the Winnipesaukee Gas & Electric Company of Laconia. Nearly two years later, on Feb. 20, 1907, the corporation changed its name to the Laconia Light & Power Company, which was identified by the Public Service Commission in 1912 as a non-operating concern which maintained only an organization. The LL&P filed its final report with the PUC on June 30, 1913, after which it presumably was dissolved.)

A feature article in the Electric Railway Review of July 13, 1907 said the street railway and the electric light company were jointly operating a generating plant beside the canal connecting Lake Opechee and Paugus Bay. The station was a brick building about 50 by 100 feet in area and its hydraulic equipment consisted of four Victor vertical turbines of 125, 75, 75 and 163 hp respectively, which were supplemented by two 225 hp three-cylinder diesel engines. There were two Triumph 125 kw 600-volt direct current railway generators, two Stanley 200 kw two-phase 2,400-volt 60 cycle alternators and a 150 kw two-phase 2,300-volt 60 cycle alternator, the last being direct-connected to one of the diesel engines. The other diesel engine could be used either in conjunction with the water wheels or separately to handle the street railway load.

According to the Review, equipment of an auxiliary power station at the street railway's carhouse consisted of the two 150 hp boilers, a Westinghouse 150 hp vertical compound engine belted to a General Electric 150 kw 550-volt direct current railway generator and the storage battery.

The Laconia Electric Light Company and the Winnipesaukee Gas & Electric Company were absorbed April 20, 1910 by the Laconia Gas & Electric Company, incorporated the same day. A new 800 kw hydroelectric station on the Winnipesaukee River in the Lochmere area of Tilton was placed on line on or about Jan. 1, 1911 and by July 31, 1913 the Laconia Street Railway was purchasing 2,300-volt alternating current from the LG&E. This was converted to 550-volt direct current by two 2,300-volt motors belted to two 125 kw generators in the former power station at the car barn. According to an inspection report of the Underwriters' Bureau of New England, the 150 hp boilers now were used for heating
purposes only and a general "air of clutter" pervaded the carhouse, the electric wiring in which was not in the best shape. The structure was rated as a poor risk and the report stated that fire insurance coverage consisted of $10,000 on the building itself and $40,000 on the rolling stock.

Later the motors and belt-driven generators were replaced by a modern motor-generator set rated at 200 kw. This provided all power for the Laconia Street Railway until the end of trolley service in the Lake City.

ROLLING STOCK

1898-1918

Closed cars 11, 13 and 15 and open cars 12 even through 22 all carried the company name in gold or silver letters on their end dashers and sides when initially placed in service in 1898 and 1899 but all lettering was omitted as an economy move when the first repainting took place. There's pictorial evidence that the original trucks on the three closed cars and possibly the two 10-bench opens were purchased from the J. G. Brill Company of Philadelphia, from which the first trucks for 13-bench opens 16, 18, 20 and 22 may have been acquired. All cars were equipped with two motors each when in service and it's believed that motors and controllers were transferred from the opens to closed cars and the snow plow in the fall and back to the opens in the spring.

The original open end platforms on the closed cars were replaced by enclosed vestibules in 1899 in accordance with state legislation passed March 20 of that year and an order of the Railroad Commissioners issued four months later. Each vestibule had three windows at the end and a folding door on each side, a single fixed step being provided at each door, and according to the 1902 census, the interiors of the cars were heated and lighted by electricity. All the single truck cars, both closed and open, incidentally, were known as "bobbers" on the Laconia Street Railway because of the bouncy ride they gave passengers.

Car 13 appears to have been retired prior to June 30, 1903 and to have been replaced by a double truck vestibuled closed car with a 27-foot body, No. 17, ordered from the Laconia Car Company Works in 1902. This had a combination of rattan-upholstered reversible transverse seats and longitudinal corner seats accommodating about 36 passengers and rode on Laconia trucks. It was equipped with two motors and a picture shows it originally had hand brakes only. In addition to being numbered, the car was lettered Wastena -- a Native American name of local area significance -- on each side beneath the windows. Interestingly, the car was not paid for until late 1903 or early 1904 and may have remained the property of the builder until that time.

The first of two double truck vestibuled closed cars added in 1907 was No. 19, ordered from the Laconia Car Company Works late in 1906. It had a 33 ft. 10 in. body and a seating capacity of 48 on 20 cross and four corner seats. There were six large "picture" windows on each car, their lower sashes being arranged to drop into side pockets, and according to the
Electric Railway Review, it was equipped with two General Electric 35 hp motors. Originally named the Acquedoctan, it later was renamed Franconia and, like No. 17, it rode on Laconia trucks and originally had hand brakes only. Both Nos. 17 and 19 were equipped with air brakes during the year ended June 30, 1908 and not long thereafter similar brakes were provided on the 13-bench opens.

(No. 19 was identical to six cars produced by Laconia for the Manchester & Derry Street Railway in that same year. Originally numbered 7-12, the M&D cars later became Nos. 2 even through 12.)

The second car had a 22-foot body built way back in 1890 when the Concord Horse Railroad was electrified. Purchased second-hand from the Concord & Manchester Electric Branch of the Boston & Maine Railroad, it had two longitudinal seats accommodating about 30 passengers. Reportedly it became the second No. 13 although no number can be discerned in a rather fuzzy picture of the car at The Weirs. Riding on Laconia trucks, it had two motors and hand brakes and appears to have been used mostly as a workmen's extra between Laconia and the ice houses of the Independent Ice Company in Lakeport. Only when No. 17 or No. 19 were in the shop for repairs was it assigned to regular passenger service.

The ownership of five closed and six open cars was reported by the Laconia Street Railway annually from June 30, 1907 through Dec. 31, 1918 and on the former date the company also listed a freight car, a work car and a snow plow. No picture of the work car has been found but the freight car (built in 1906) was a 28-foot double truck flat affair apparently produced in the railway's shop in 1906. Part of an old closed horsecar body served as a cab at one end. It rode on a pair of Bemis 40 trucks and was equipped with two 35 hp motors. Later, the original cab was replaced by a wooden almost square boxlike affair and a flat roof was constructed the entire length of the car. Side and end curtains were provided to protect shipments in inclement weather. After freight service ended, the car was used in work service and still was on the property as late as Dec. 31, 1923.

Operated occasionally over the Laconia Street Railway during the summer of 1914 was a prototype four-wheel center entrance stepless closed car, No. 500, produced by the Laconia Car Company for exhibition at the annual convention of the American Electric Railway Association in Atlantic City in October of that year. It measured 33 feet long overall, had a seating capacity of 44, rode on an Eckstrom opposed pivot radial axle truck with a 15-foot wheelbase and 28-in. wheels and was equipped with two Westinghouse 40 hp motors, Westinghouse PK control and Westinghouse "featherweight" air brakes. Reportedly it derailed easily and occasional mechanical or electrical problems caused breakdowns which interrupted regular Laconia-Weirs service. Finally, when it seemed that all the "bugs" had been worked out and its display at the convention ended, the car was shipped to Glens Falls, N.Y. for experimental service over a local route of the Hudson Valley Railway.
According to the Electric Railway Journal of Dec. 15, 1915, it was supposed to be run in Glens Falls for only a month but the car was purchased by the Hudson Valley at a "bargain price" in 1916 and was assigned to the South Street-Depot Line in Glens Falls until retired.

Three identical cars were built by Laconia in 1916 for the Bangor (Maine) Railway & Electric Company, on which they were numbered 6, 8 and 10 and were known as the "Merry Widows." They handled passengers well and were good snow fighters but had a propensity to jump the track and because of their floating axles were difficult to rerail. Their doom was sealed in 1918 when the BR&E inaugurated one-man operation on its city lines and the three cars were sold in 1920 at a substantial loss to the Princeton Power Company of Princeton, W. Va. Pictures show they were equipped with double trucks by their new owner but how long they remained in service is unknown.

MANAGEMENT

With the exception of 1900, when George H. Cooke was at the helm, Harry L. Pierce reigned as president of the Laconia Street Railway from 1899 through 1924 and also was identified as general manager from 1901 through 1904. Charles T. Foster was treasurer and general manager in 1899 and 1900 and was succeeded in the former post in 1901 by Edmund Little of Laconia, a former treasurer of the Laconia & Lake Village Horse Railroad. Little stepped down in 1907, on June 30 of which Edmund P. Hadley of Leominster was listed as treasurer. Two years later the post was held by Frank H. Viele of Boston, who was succeeded in 1910 by another Bostonian, William H. Tylee. Harry G. Lowe, also of Boston, was named treasurer in 1911 and served through 1924.

Lewis S. Pierce, brother of President Pierce, who had begun his street railway career in Lynn, Mass. in 1887, served as superintendent of the Laconia Street Railway from Aug. 1, 1898 until that same date in 1919 and also was secretary and manager of the Laconia Electric Light Company for a time. By the end of 1919 Fred Huff was superintendent and purchasing agent and he still was incumbent at the end of 1924 when President Pierce was a resident of Tampa, Fla.

General offices of the company were situated at first in Leominster but were moved to the Boston financial district in 1909. The operating headquarters, of course, were in Laconia and for many years the railway's secretary and clerk of corporation was George P. Munsey of the Lake City. His successor was Atty. Frank M. Beckford, who was identified as secretary, clerk and general counsel on Dec. 31, 1924 when directors consisted of President Pierce, Norman P. Webber, also of Tampa; Treasurer Lowe, Charles P. Mudge of Boston and Superintendent Huff.

YEARS OF POVERTY

While the Laconia & Lake Village Horse Railroad had been profitable, the Laconia Street Railway very definitely was not after electrification. Although revenues exceeded operating expenses annually from 1899 through 1924, there were 11 years when they couldn't be stretched to meet bond interest payments and taxes, shortfalls ranging from a low of $519 during the fiscal year ended June 30, 1912 to a high of $7,988 for the calendar year 1917, on
December 31 of which there was an accrued deficit of $19,157 and unpaid bond interest totaled $20,750. Needless to say, stockholders never received any dividends and the sinking fund required by the first mortgage bond indenture never was established. Passengers, of course, were the main revenue source and ridership varied from year to year, the peak being the year ended June 30, 1914 when 711,934 people paid fares. Thereafter patronage declined almost steadily, the number of passengers carried in 1924 being only 45 percent of those reported in 1914. Revenues from less-than-carload freight service from 1906 through 1918 were insignificant despite extensive promotional efforts.

The Democrat of Dec. 21, 1917 said the future of the street railway was very much in doubt. The bond interest was about three years in arrears and the bondholders reportedly were having an inventory of the property made preparatory to foreclosing on the mortgages securing the bonds. No foreclosure action was taken at this time but when the first and second mortgage bonds matured on May 1, 1919, the former were extended for 10 years and the latter were cancelled as part of a financial reorganization which reduced the property investment from $286,032 to $244,611. The extended bonds were acquired by President Pierce, the majority stockholder, thus giving him absolute control of the company.

LOOP SERVICE DISCONTINUE

Filed with the Public Service Commission in late 1917 was a petition for authority to discontinue trips on that part of the Laconia loop from the intersection of South Main and Pine Streets through South Main, Garfield, Lincoln, Pearl and Court Streets until May 1, 1918 because revenues from its operation fell far short of the cost of operating it. There was no opposition and on Jan. 2, 1918 the Public Service Commission, stating that the financial condition of the Laconia Street Railway did not warrant its furnishing unnecessary service at a loss, granted the desired permission. Most points on the loop were within fairly easy walking distance from downtown Laconia and after a fare increase in August 1917 patronage of the circuit had plummeted.

Similarly there was no opposition a few months later when the street railway petitioned the PSC for authority to abandon the entire loop and to remove its rails and trolley overhead. Such authority was granted July 2, 1918 but it would appear that only about a quarter mile of track actually was torn up. Left in place were the rails and overhead on South Main Street from Court Street to Garfield Street and on Court Street to Pearl Street. The railway reported on Dec. 31, 1920 that it owned 8.08 miles of main track and, still, .51 mile of sidings, switches, etc. and there were no further changes through 1924.

Because of the unsatisfactory financial condition of many New Hampshire street railways immediately after the end of World War I, the state legislature passed an act (Chapter 139) in 1919 exempting from taxation trolley lines which failed to earn sufficient money to meet operating expenses and fixed charges, excluding bond interest, and provide for repairs, maintenance and depreciation. The Laconia Street Railway easily qualified for this exemption, which was granted annually from 1920 through 1925, and as a result of this relief and reduced operating expenses resulting from the operation of one-man cars the company
reported small net incomes in 1920, 1921, 1922, 1923 and 1924 despite the plummeting ridership resulting from steadily increasing automobile competition.

ONE MAN OPERATION STARTED

An operating loss of $4,282 in 1918 prompted a decision by the Laconia Street Railway management in early 1919 to adopt one man operation and dispense with the services of conductors except when open trolleys were in service. Arrangements were made a little later in the year to purchase two single truck one-man closed safety cars of Birney design, Nos. 21 and 23, for about $6,000 each from the American Car Company of St. Louis, Mo. These proved highly successful and two more, Nos. 25 and 27, were acquired in 1920 from the Wason Manufacturing Company for $3,027.50 in cash and $10,837.70 in promissory notes, payable over a three-year period.

Each of the new cars had an effective seating capacity of 32, rode on a Brill 79E four-wheel truck and was equipped with two General Electric 258 (25 hp) motors, K-10 controllers and General Electric air brakes. Features of the new cars included so-called "dead man" safety equipment consisting of a spring-loaded controller handle on which constant downward pressure had to be maintained by the motorman (now designated as operator) while a car was in motion. Releasing this handle on a moving car without first depressing a foot valve at the base of the controller caused the power to be cut off, the brakes to be applied, sand spread on the rails and one or both of the doors on the car to be balanced so they could be pushed open by passengers. The premise was that if an operator suffered an ill turn or dropped dead while at the controls, the automatic equipment would stop the car immediately.

The Birney cars, which were painted red, provided all base service the year round after 1920, the open cars being run only on days of particularly heavy travel in summer. By the end of 1923, only four "breezers" remained, these consisting of two of the 10-bench type, Nos. 12 and 14, and two of the 13-bench variety. Other passenger equipment consisted of two double truck closed cars, Nos. 17 and 19, but there's reason to believe that only the latter, which had been equipped for one man operation, was active, the former being held in reserve. There also were one work car (the former freight car) and the snow plow. Also on the property were eight Westinghouse 101B (40 hp) motors and an Indianapolis welding machine utilized primarily for track repairs.

BUSES TAKE OVER

By the end of 1924 the track of the Laconia Street Railway was in wretched physical condition due to the company's inability for several years to pay for adequate maintenance. Bond interest unpaid totaled $11,375 and there was a deficit of $11,375 on the books. So on April 6, 1925 the street railway filed a petition with the Public Service Commission asking for the right to operate motor vehicles "as a substitute for and in connection with the streetcar service now operated by it over regular routes in the city of Laconia." The authority was sought under the provisions of Chapter 67 of the Laws of 1925, an act which empowered street railways within New Hampshire to run buses.
At a public hearing in Concord on May 13, Laconia city officials supported the street railway's petition and asked that the substitution of buses for trolleys be made as quickly as possible so the rails could be removed and the streets put in good condition for public use. There being no opposition from the public, the railway's petition was granted May 27 when the PSC authorized the operation of buses over two routes:

Route 1. Beginning at the junction of Main and Garfield Streets in Ward 5 and thence running to the Weirs terminal in Ward 1.

Route 2. Beginning at Stark Street, so-called, in Ward 6 (Lakeport) and thence running to the Weirs terminal in Ward 1.

Then on July 6 the street railway filed a petition asking for the right to extend its bus service to Opechee Park, the Laconia Country Club and the Pearl Street playgrounds whenever there was a need for public transportation to these points. Such authority was granted August 6 by the Public Service Commission, which stated that no regular running schedule had to be maintained over the three routes but that trips need only be made "when reasonably necessary to accommodate the public travel." These routes were:

1. Beginning on Main Street, thence to the Country Club via Main Street, North Main Street and Opechee Park.

2. Beginning at the postoffice on Union Avenue in Ward 6, thence to the Country Club via Elm Street.

3. Beginning at a point on Main Street two hundred feet south of the southerly boundary line of Court Street where it intersections said Main Street, thence southwesterly to Garfield Street, thence southwesterly over Garfield Street to Lincoln Street, thence westerly over Lincoln Street to Pearl Street, thence northwesterly over Pearl Street to Court Street and thence northwesterly over Court Street to said Main Street, with the right to operate in either direction over said route."

In anticipation of its first petition being approved, the company had made arrangements to purchase three Reo six-cylinder 21-passenger buses, Nos. 1, 2 and 3, and the first two were placed in operation between downtown Laconia and The Weirs on or about Memorial Day, with the third coach arriving in June. Both the trolleys and buses were run during June and July to give the public an opportunity to compare the two and hopefully reach the conclusion that the motor coaches would be satisfactory. The electric cars made their last official trips on Sunday, August 9, but they appeared on the streets occasionally for a brief period thereafter if one of the buses broke down.

An Underwriters Bureau of New England report of Oct. 20, 1925 said that all trolley cars of the Laconia Street Railway were idle and were stored on the car barn's center track, which had been extended 150 feet to the rear of the building. It added that the three buses were housed in the north section of the carhouse, a concrete floor having been laid over part of the wooden floor, and that this same section was rented to Shostany & Caron, who operated
Once the buses were in operation and providing satisfactory service, the American Trust Company, trustee of the $91,000 in first mortgage bonds of 1899, asked the Belknap County Superior Court on Sept. 29, 1925 to place the street railway in receivership. It stated in its petition that no interest on the bonds had been paid since May 1, 1923, and requested that the receiver be authorized to sell certain "personal property" and real estate no longer required by the company. The petition was granted October 1 when Associate Justice Oscar L. Young appointed Frank M. Beckford, the railway's secretary and general counsel, as receiver and empowered him to proceed with the desired liquidation. He also was to continue running the motor coaches; to receive all revenues and to pay all expenses.

Authorized by the court on October 10 was the sale of the four Birney cars, two single truck open cars, two double truck open cars, two double truck closed cars, the snow plow, four or five sets of old streetcar trucks, two boilers, the motor-generator set, one direct current generator, the eight Westinghouse motors, eight miles of track, eight miles of trolley wires, 13 miles of direct current feeder cables, all poles and fittings and a variety of tools and other items for $12,000 to B. Shapiro, a Boston scrap metal dealer, who had submitted the highest bid. A week later, on October 17, the court approved the sale of the Union Avenue carhouse for $15,000 to the Davison Motor Car Company of the Lake City. All proceeds from both sales were turned over to President Pierce as the sole bondholder.

Less than a month later, on November 7, the receiver was authorized by the court to purchase an additional bus from the Paige-Jewett Automobile Company of Manchester. (The vehicle had a Stewart chassis and motor and a Reo body and $1,000 of the $3,000 purchase price was to be paid in cash and 18 interest-bearing notes payable at monthly intervals were to be issued for the balance.) Approved the same day was the future purchase of a second-hand bus to convey men employed in cutting ice at Black Brook in January and February, the receiver stating that these workers wore shoes and other clothing which could damage the coaches used in regular passenger service. As best can be determined this vehicle never was acquired.

The next major development occurred May 17, 1926 when, upon petition of the American Trust Company, the court ordered foreclosure of the mortgage securing the bonds. One week later, as a result of this foreclosure, the receiver sold the four buses, a Ford motor truck, miscellaneous equipment and supplies and all of the Laconia Street Railway's rights, privileges and franchises for $25,000 to Howard W. Byse and Guy M. Tetley. Almost immediately thereafter, the purchasers organized the Laconia Street Railway Inc. to continue the bus service and on June 21 the new corporation was authorized to issue 500 shares of capital stock, at a par value of $50 per share.
All physical and other assets of the Laconia Street Railway having been sold, a petition asking for discharge of the receiver was filed with the superior court on July 12, 1926. August 16 was set as a deadline for filing claims. Beckford formally stepped down on August 25 and in his final report he stated that after all possible income had been received and all expenses paid, only $319.50 remained to be turned over to Mr. Pierce who, in the end, received less than 50 percent of the par value of the bonds in his possession.

All four Birney cars were resold by Shapiro to the York Utilities Company of Sanford, Me., on which they became Nos. 72 odd through 78. Double truck closed car No. 19 went to the Wheeling (W. Va.) Public Service Company, which renumbered it 72, and the body of No. 17 was purchased by a private party in the Laconia area. All four open cars and the snow plow are believed to have been junked as they were worthless in the second hand market. The body of one of the American-built Birneys, No. 21, is now preserved at the Connecticut Electric Railway Museum in East Windsor, Conn.

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Regards,

Ed Ramsdell, Editor

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