



*Vol 15*

# *THE MAIN LINE*



*No 12*

*The Monthly Bulletin  
of the New England Electric Railway Historical Society Libraries*

February 2024

## Goings On at Seashore —

After some nastiness the Winter has been for the most part reasonably cooperative, if a bit wet. Projects abound around the campus including both the Maine Central Model Railroad building and the South Boston 2.0 moving ahead at a good clip. Some cars are in South Boston and the shop has been able to utilize the new protected space (weathertight, insulated, and well lighted) to move projects along at an accelerated pace. Including DC Transit #1304 having its motor generator set repaired, Wheeling Traction #639 is having repairs to its beautiful cane seating (see below), Nagasaki #134 is having its roof recanvassed, Manchester & Nashua #38 is having its magnificent windows refurbished, and Eastern Mass #4387 is also in for some TLC.

The re-caning restoration of seats torn during the season in Wheeling Traction Company No. #639 (1924 Cincinnati Car Co.) is progressing. The work is impressive in that seat caning is at the present time somewhat an art form. The practice is not as common as it once was, and artisans who can properly repair cane seating/chairs are becoming increasingly scarce.

## Events -

Almost exactly two months to opening day - May 4, 2024!

**For additional event information and ongoing museum information throughout the year be sure to check: <https://trolley museum.org/events/>**



## Do You Recognize ?

Last Month's Do You Recognize -

Last month's line of interest was a major factor in the electrification and ongoing modernization of streetcar service in the state capital of Little Rock, AR from 1902 until 1923 and then, after being acquired by a subsidiary of the Arkansas Central Power Company, electric operations continued on until 1947.



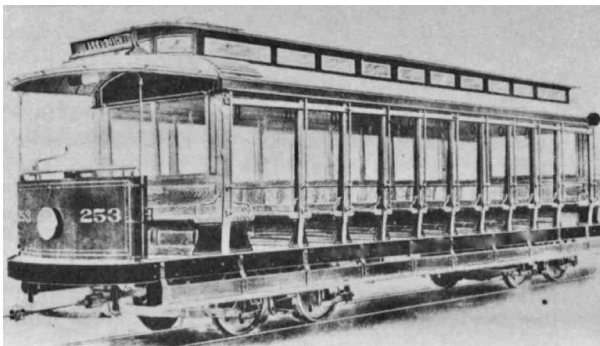
Citizen's Railway mulecar #14  
Builder Unkn (c. 1880)

Horace G. Allis, who was also president of a local power & light company and a city bank had consolidated several companies and constructed an integrated carbarn, generating station and power distribution system to serve the combined and electrified lines. Late 1891 saw the company unveil

Beginning in 1877 with the development of a mule-powered line by businessmen in Little Rock. Animal propelled streetcar routes were begun by several companies over the next decade with electrification gradually occurring. In 1891 the company had twenty-two miles of track, forty-five streetcars, and 308 horses and mules. By the early 1890s a native of the city,



# 204 7-window closed car - St. Louis (1896)



#253 13-bench open - St. Louis (1902)

the first of twenty-eight new electric single-truck closed streetcars No. 50 - 79, later renumbered 150-179.

Unfortunately the financial panic of 1893 and ensuing depression brought about financial instability and, ultimately, the sale of the streetcar system. Finally in 1902 improved

technological expertise and solid financial resources brought to bear by a New York City-based railway tycoon provided a solid basis for creating the Little Rock Railway and Electric Company through the merger of the existing railway company and a light and power company. The new management brought in a New York-based engineering firm and committed \$500,000 (around \$18.25 million in today's money) for improvements, service expansions, and rolling stock



# 226 - 10-window  
St. Louis Car Co. (1905)

upgrades. By early 1904 a new line to a developing area of the city was in operation. New carbarns and power stations were constructed and the former carbarn at was converted into company offices. By 1909 the system had an average ridership of 9 million passengers per year and this remained fairly constant into the 1930s. In 1913 the line was reported as owning 32 miles of electrified track.

In 1905 the New York-based owners began acquiring several railway companies across the South. This did not reduce their support of our line and for another two decades the company continued to be central in the development of the capital city. In 1923 the New York owners sold the line to a regional power and light company that was the primary electrical utility



# 401 Capital Transportation Company  
11-window lightweight car - American (1924)

utility's successor still provides power to much of the state. Eventually motor vehicle competition won out and with the decline after the demands of World War II the last electric streetcar service associated with the old system ended in 1947.

Throughout the various

company for much of the state from 1913 to 1989. The electrical



North Street Carhouse



# 318 Birney - American (1926)

reorganizations and purchases the company's primary supplier of rolling stock was the St. Louis Car Company. Some sources credit St. Louis Car Company with supplying all of the line's equipment while other sources indicate a few built by American Car Company. It seems

reasonably certain that, at a minimum, the Birneys acquired in 1926 came from American Car Company and records also indicate eight double-end



lightweight cars delivered from American in 1924. Perhaps inadvertent confusion as to built by St. Louis and built in St. Louis.

In 1950 the regional power company sold the transit system to a group of local investors. A strike by the ATU in 1955-1956 left the company short on public sympathy and in increasingly dire financial condition. The capital city and an adjacent city awarded a franchise to a new company in February 28, 1956. Although enjoying local support the same financial problems still existed and by 1962 the company had failed. Declining passenger revenue and rising costs proved insurmountable. In 1962 the transit company began to receive government subsidies and in 1971 a study recommended moving to public ownership, this took place in early 1972. This continues to the present although the exact form of public ownership and communities involved have evolved over time. In



Postcard Main Street In the Capital



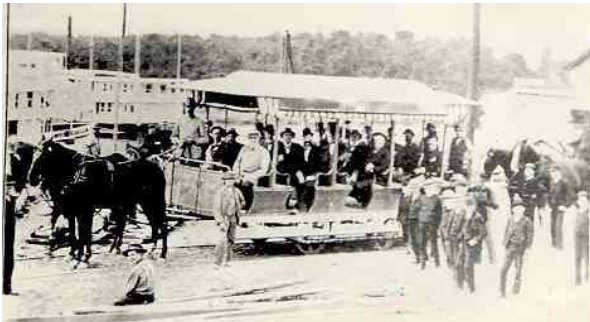
Another Postcard View of Main Street In the Pre-WW1 Days

2004 the transit agency re-introduced rail with a replica Birney by Gomaco operating over 3.4 miles of track. Four additional Gomaco replicas were added - this route caters to tourists but also local residents and is credited for economic growth along its corridor.



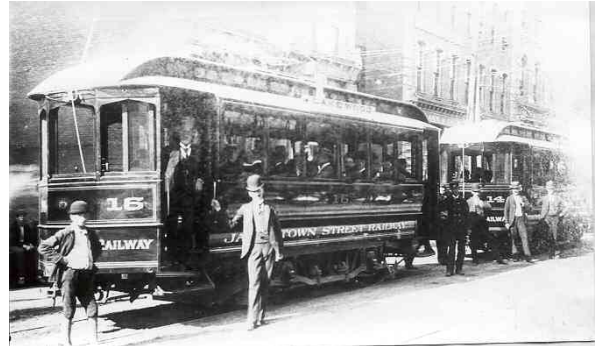
## This Month's Do You Recognize -

Our street railway this month opened its 1.77 mile horse car line in June of 1884 running from downtown in its home city to the fairgrounds. The following year it was extended further to a 3.4 mile system. The horse system had 13 four-wheel cars, mostly if not all Brill products, and 42

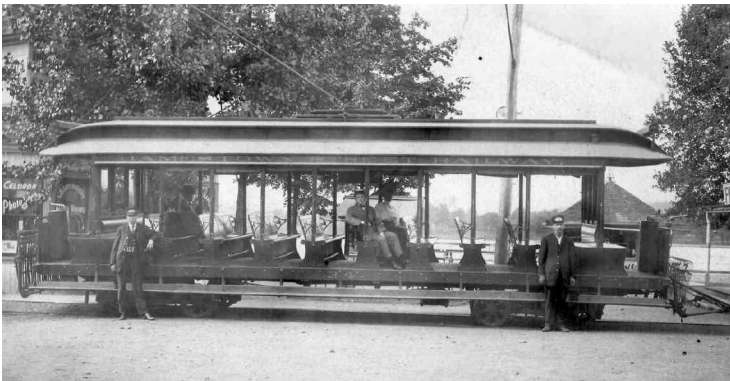


The First Horse Car - Opening Day  
June 1884 - J.G. Brill (1884)

horses. The system was extended and electrified in 1891 with work completed the following year. The first electric car ran June 11, 1891. The main line and branches was roughly 13 miles. In 1893 the line to the site of the amusement park added another 2.5



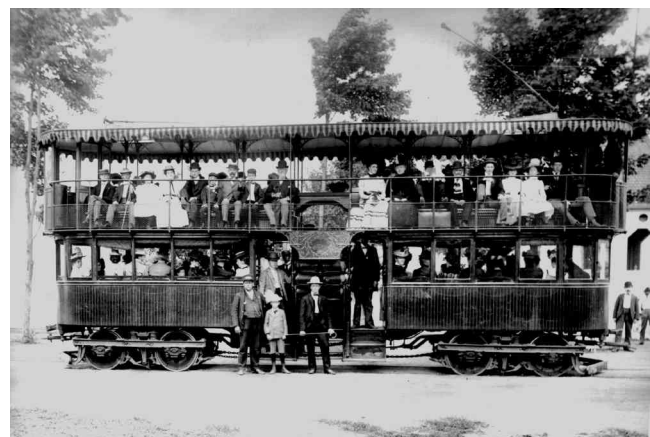
The Electrics Arrive - #16 & #14 -  
First day of Service in  
June of 1891 - J.G. Brill (1890)



#34 12-Bench Open - J.G. Brill (1891)

miles. In 1904 another 3.5 miles was added. The powerhouse was on 8th St. near the boat landing, and the car barn at the west end of Third St. The founder's family had been connected since the beginning, but after electrification in 1891-92 became the dominant Interest.

The World's Columbian Exposition of 1893 (aka Chicago World's Fair) had an interesting impact on the line. The owner and president of the street railway company attended the exposition and became enamored with the Pullman Car Company exhibit and in particular a new double-deck vestibule car being displayed. He ordered one of these for his railway and this double-deck open car had such popularity that it ran summers



This popular "party car" ran summers through 1923  
Pullman Car Company - (1893/94)



through 1923 and was finally scrapped in 1926. This “party car” was initially so popular that an extra fare was charged. It appears that the double deck may have operated for traction company as well as our street railway as various photos exist identifying it as belonging to each. This is also true for several other cars such as 15-bench #200.



15-Bench Open #200 - One image identifies this car as ex-Connecticut Company - Likely Brill

In 1893 the street railway and a local land company, both owned by the same entrepreneur joined to form an amusement company. An amusement park opened in 1894. It was served by the street railway and a steamboat line controlled by the same owner. While at the World's Fair the owner was also impressed by the world's first ferris wheel. He

subsequently acquired a smaller "Phoenix Wheel" from the 1895 Cotton States and International Exposition in Atlanta for the midway at the new park (Certainly puts “impulse shopping” in perspective).

In 1904 they also undertook a route for a new traction company from the western end of the street railway some 34 miles along the west shore of the lake to a connection with a regional traction company.

This was an interurban line that reached a future resort community July of 1904 and ultimately on to the connection with the regional traction system in 1906. The traction company used the street railways shops. The traction company never had exceptional traffic and auto competition plus competition from yet another interurban on the east shore of the lake which had been opened in 1914



1907

founded by their and our street railway's common owner brought things to a close in 1926 with the line abandoned except for 2.5 miles taken over by the street railway.



#87 - ? (?)

Continuing from the horsecar days the street railway was primarily a customer of J.G. Brill into the middle of the first

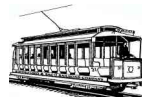
decade of the Twentieth Century with the exception of the owner's infatuation with the Pullman double deck.

A block of 10 cars was reported in railway trade publications for 1916 but no manufacturer was indicated. In 1926 the street railway purchased 8 Birney cars from the St. Louis Car Company. The street railway had also formed a motor bus subsidiary in 1924.

By the 1930s the effects of the Depression, auto competition, and the deaths of several members of the founding family brought things to a head and the street railway closed its remaining 26 miles of track effective January 1, 1938.



Six Months After The Switch Was Pulled



**Library Committee**



**Library Committee**

The Library Committee has a committee meeting and workshop scheduled on March 9, 2024 (10AM - 2PM) - (weather conditions look good at present) - Further information as the week progresses (Karen Dooks - 781-799-5868).

Several items deferred from the cancelled February workshop need attention:

- Any slides awaiting in the garage will be moved to available archival storage boxes.
- There are still a few pictures awaiting descriptions that can be finished.
- Materials taken to the Big E need to be labeled and relocated.
- The Library needs a good cleaning and vacuuming.

An election of officers will be held at the March committee meeting.

The Library Committee's meetings on Saturdays are held from 10AM -2 PM with start times adjusted seasonally to weather and traffic. The meetings are on a bimonthly basis on the odd months followed by a workshop with the standalone workshops from 10 AM -2 PM on the even months. Start

times are adjusted seasonally to weather and traffic. Updated information will be forthcoming as available.

The Wednesday Evening Workshops are still cancelled - hopefully resumption in the future. There is also discussion of possible additional workshops.

For further information/questions concerning the Library please contact Karen Dooks (781-799-5868).

By Karen Dooks, Chair

Currently scheduled meeting dates for 2024 with business meeting followed by workshop: March 9, May 11; July 13; Sept 14; Nov 9

Scheduled workshop dates for 2024: Apr 13; June 8; Aug 10; Oct 12; Dec 14



Links:

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

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_museum/)  
[https://digitalmaine.com/trolley\\_blueprints/](https://digitalmaine.com/trolley_blueprints/)  
[https://digitalmaine.com/trolley\\_images/](https://digitalmaine.com/trolley_images/)  
[https://digitalmaine.com/trolley\\_documents/](https://digitalmaine.com/trolley_documents/)

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





*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](mailto:TheMainLine@ramsdell.com) .

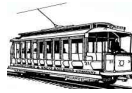
Regards,

Ed Ramsdell, Editor

*The Main Line*

[TheMainLine@ramsdell.com](mailto:TheMainLine@ramsdell.com)

<http://www.trolleyuseum.org>



For additional event information and ongoing museum information throughout the year be sure to check: <https://trolleyuseum.org/events/>



### **Wandering through the collection -**

A bit of colorized Boston at or before the dawn of the motor car - at least of motors in any quantity:



Really impressive structure



NORTH STATION, BOSTON, MASS.



21,800 (M)

COPYRIGHT  
905.  
BY DETROIT  
PUBLISHING  
CO.



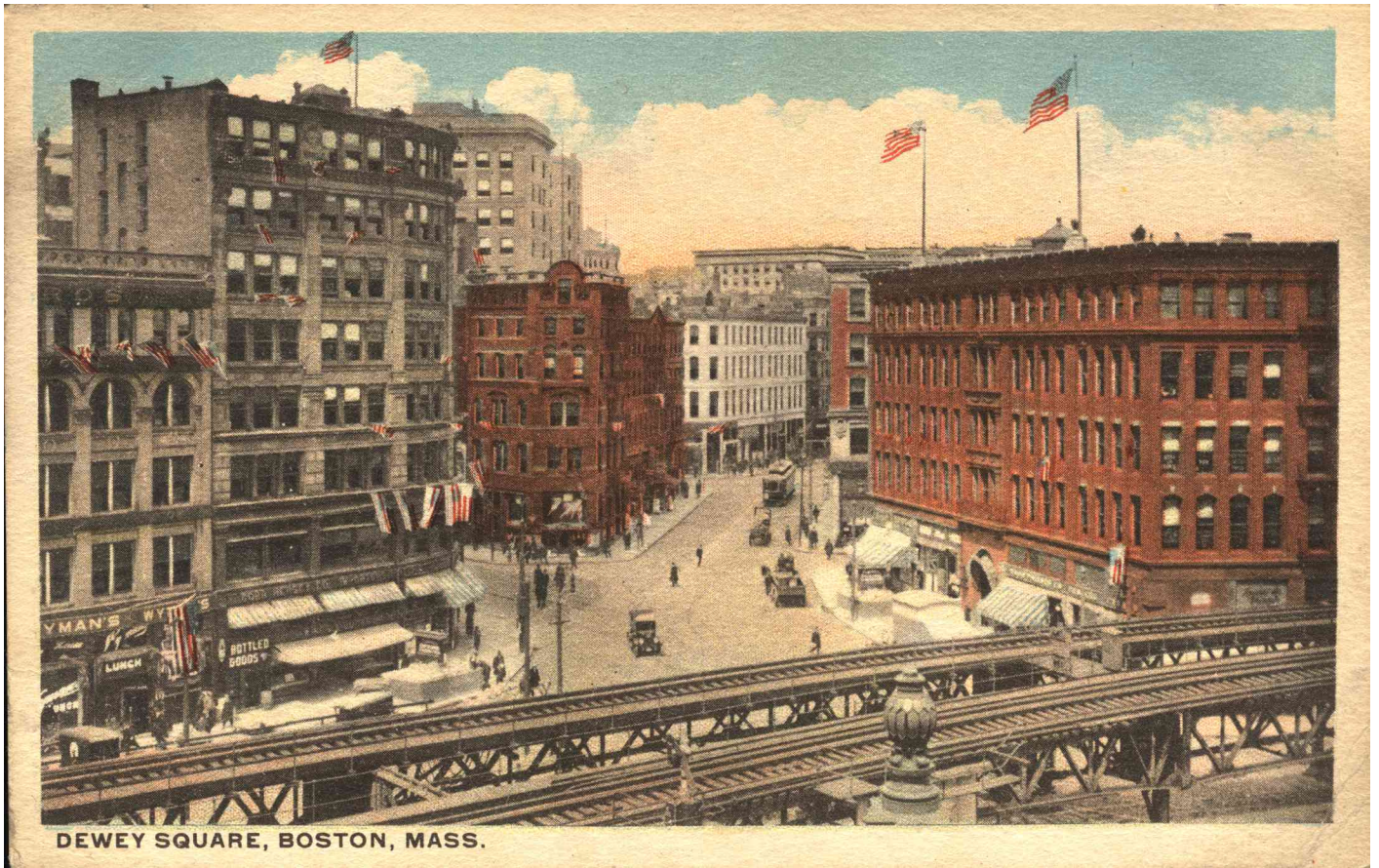
10105. SOUTH STATION, BOSTON, MASS.





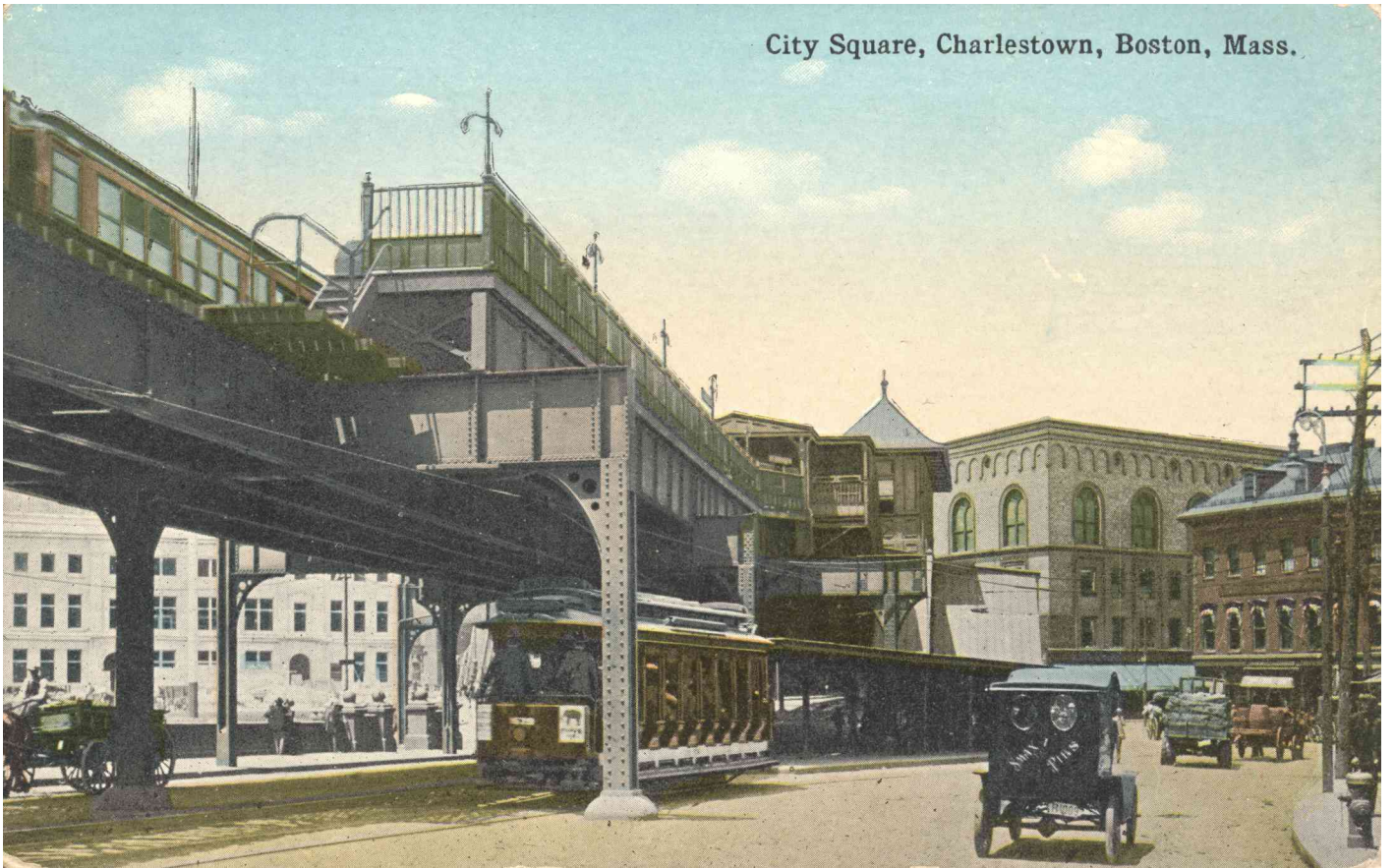
Not colorized but an interesting view thru time - that is 144 years ago!







City Square, Charlestown, Boston, Mass.



WASHINGTON STREET, BOSTON, MASS.

