



*Vol 16*

# *THE MAIN LINE*



*No 11*

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

February 2025

## **Goings On at Seashore —**

### **Winter At Seashore -**

As reported last month Seashore participated in the Amherst Railway Society Railroad Hobby Show on January 25 & 26, 2025 at the Eastern States Exposition in West Springfield, Massachusetts. Seashore volunteers had two tables for the Library's annual book sale, and additional tables supporting the museum's overall outreach efforts.

Meanwhile there is considerable activity going on "under the snow cover" at the museum. Work continues apace at the Restoration Shop and in the additional space now available in the new South Boston carhouse fleet as well as planned bunkhouse improvements and ongoing work in the model railroad building, and more.

### **Model Railroad Building**

Seashore Trolley Museum's Model Railroad Building will be open all winter and spring long, every Thursday-Saturday from 10AM-4PM. If the week is a school vacation week in Maine or New Hampshire, it also will be open the Wednesday of that week from 10AM-4PM. The Maine Central Model Railroad is the State of Maine's largest HO-scale model railroad. Check out the museum's calendar to confirm the time the model railroad will be open on the date of your planned visit, <https://trolley museum.org/events/>

### **Additional Events**

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 -

Our interurban of interest - The Union Traction Company - ran, somewhat typically for its region, between quite minor endpoints - Parsons, KS and Nowata, OK. Both quite small in terms of population and serving no communities of over 15,000 anywhere along its 77 mile route. The attraction for its promoters being developing oil fields along portions of the line. Parsons, KS was a major rail hub in the "Old West" and also had a munitions plant while the Nowata, OK was a train stop for Native Americans from the East being resettled by the government under the Indian Removal Act of 1830. Purportedly the name of this community originated from a word for friendly in the Delaware language. Trolley service was also provided in two of its intermediate communities.

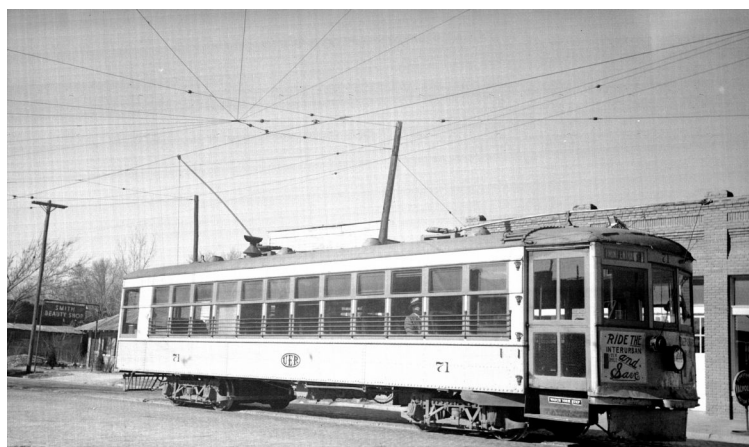


Box Motor #62

The line was promoted by the Siggins brothers from Pennsylvania. The Union Traction Company was incorporated in 1907, bringing together two little street railways in Coffeyville and Independence, KS with service beginning in July of 1907. A 10 mile extension to Cherryvale, KS added in March of 1910, and the

extension to Parsons, KS in 1914 and finally south to Nowata, OK in 1915.

A somewhat typical interurban for the area and time this system operated lightweight equipment and over track work of probably not the highest quality. The through trip between endpoints was scheduled at slightly less than four hours. It is purported that effectively no one ever rode the entire length of the



No.# 71 - American Car Co. (1925)

system except on the first day the route opened and on the last day it operated. There were typically nine trips a day each way over the system and a couple of scheduled freights. In the late 1920's the service was altered with eleven round-trips on the north end of the system and seven on the south, again the breakpoint (Coffeyville, KS) being roughly midway,

plus the two freight runs. The freight business was constrained by competing steam railroad service to towns of any size.

Early on the little road earned enough to make its interest payments but by



No. #82 - Baldwin-Westinghouse (1914), no. #603 - Prior Company Shops (1929)

the early twenties economic problems were surfacing. Through no fault of the interurban the center of the country began experiencing economic difficulties a decade earlier than the stock market crash. During World War One there had been government price supports for various commodities. At the end of the war price supports were abandoned and supply and demand was allowed to

regulate the marketplace. Production of commodities remained at the levels when price supports existed. Surpluses quickly appeared and drove prices down while the response of producers was to keep producing as much as possible to maximize earnings which led to further price declines. By 1921 the road was in financial trouble and in 1927 it entered bankruptcy, reemerging in 1937 reorganized under the name of "Union Electric Railway". From 1921 until its demise in 1947 it was able to cover operating expenses in only two years.

On the positive side the system was amazingly resilient, perhaps impervious to change is a better description. The milage and operation at the end of service in 1947 was not much different than the day the total route was completed in 1915 and practically identical to that of the mid-1920s. This can partially be attributed to a very gradual decline in revenues rather than some precipitous



No. #80 - Baldwin-Westinghouse (1917)

drop that triggered abandonment or retrenchment of many systems across the country. The state regulatory commissions were also extremely protective of the interurban and effectively barred bus competition until the very end. The local trolley service in the two intermediate cities qualify as some the last survivors of small city streetcar operations.



The Kansas Trails Bus System that was instated at the end of service survived some number of years. By the early 1950s the route was still in operation although as two separate operations from the midpoint that did not operate synchronized service so as to make through trips from one end to the other practical. By 1960 the firm was still serving the points of the old interurban but the route was now scattered over several longer distance routes serving more populated areas and travel over the old route would have taken parts of two or even three days. Currently there is effectively no public transportation over the route although some intermediate points still have services that cross the old interurban and there is a call-on-demand service in Parsons, KS.

Something I found very interesting - there is a Youtube film of a 1940's ride on the Union Electric - IN COLOR - over what is apparently the whole route from Nowata to Parsons. The clip is 35 minutes long for the approximately four hour trip so obviously every minute isn't covered but it is fascinating. From watching the film it appears it was taken mostly from #604, a box motor - 604 was built by Oklahoma Railways in 1929 and sold to Union Electric Railway in 1946. Since UER closed in early 1948 this gives a fairly tight time frame for the film.

It is at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=WgXO7xiKCBE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WgXO7xiKCBE) .



Do You Recognize?

This Month's Do You recognize -

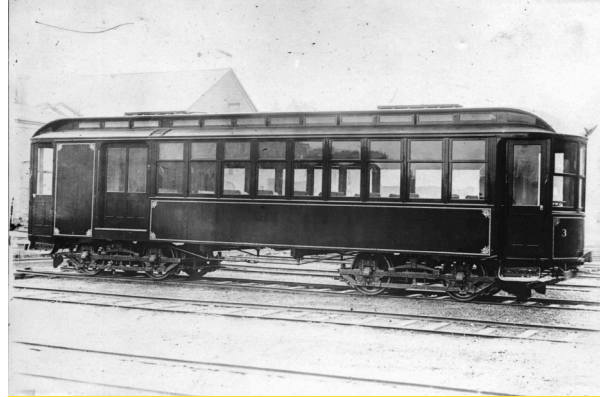
Our electric railroad of interest this month had several common



Leased 4-4-0 in use on the big trestle during construction (c1897)

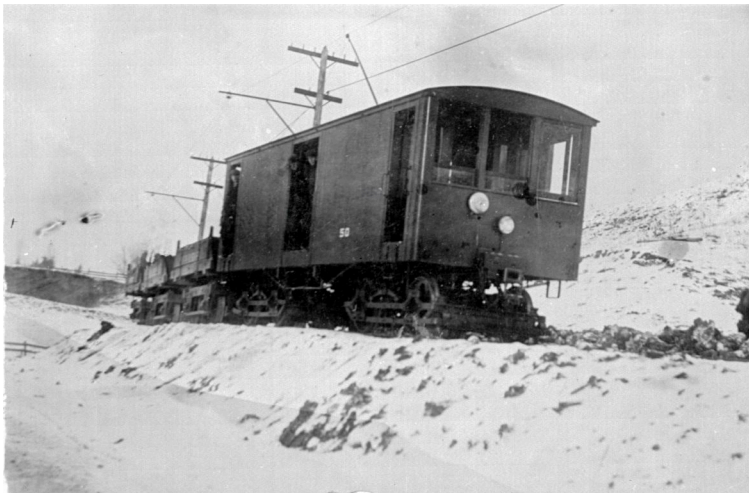
characteristics of small rural lines. It was quite small (12 miles) with a small population base. Built primarily to connect its hometown with an somewhat larger adjacent community that was served by a steam road. Our road was intended to provide access to various urban markets through this connection. The primary traffic being agricultural products and various manufactured goods - primarily wood products. An area adjacent to our railroad's home

town did become a recreational attraction by the mid-19th century although this seems to have done little for the railroad while the southerly endpoint of our line became famous for producing ice cream, although that occurred a little over fifty years after our line ended trolley service so that didn't help much either.



No. #3 Combine - Wason Company

Our endpoint communities, ultimately were located in the same state after the American Revolution, both had been chartered by the royal governor for the region. By the time our railroad was founded, the area had also passed through being an "independent republic" during the revolution, and joining the United States in 1791.

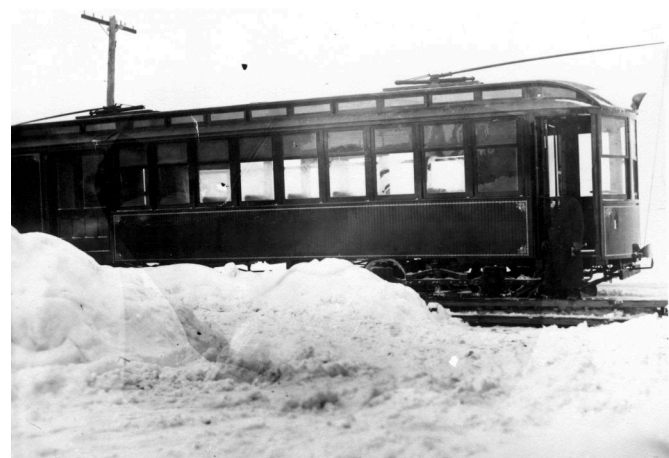


No. #50 Freight Motor - Wason Company (c 1897)

Our line had difficulty getting started with an electric railroad being authorized by the state legislature in 1865, and reauthorized in 1872, 1888, and 1894. Finally in 1897 sufficient funding was secured so that actual construction could begin. The owners of a large lumber company in the line's hometown made significant

investment towards funding the line. The most important investor, putting up about half of the needed funds was a Boston businessman who made ongoing investments throughout his lifetime and ultimately became our line's president. He also owned an early Boston professional baseball team.

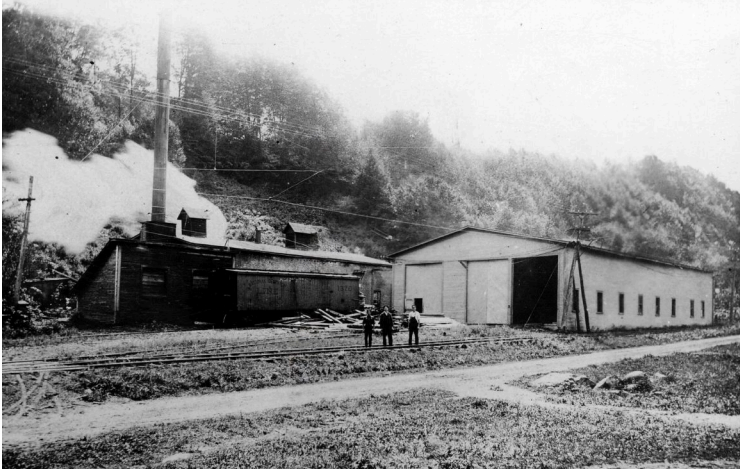
The line was constructed from the hometown to a southerly endpoint town some 12 miles away. A power plant was constructed adjacent to the car barn on the edge of the hometown. Unfortunately power was so diminished at the southerly end of line that operations, especially towing a freight car with one of the freight motors, were very difficult and operation of



No. #1 Combine - Wason Company (c 1897)

the double-ended rotary plow nearly impossible. A battery shed was soon built to boost power at the southern end of the line, charging when demand was low and supplementing from the batteries when demand required

such. In 1912 the line began buying commercial power with a rotary converter being located at the carbarn.



Company Shops and Power Plant (also location of rotary converter after going to commercial power).

The line operated three combines (#1,2, and 3), two freight motors, a single truck flat car, and the doubled-ended rotary snowplow. The #2 combine was badly damaged in August 1912 and permanently removed from service. The

passenger cars, freight motors, and flat car were Wason products. The plow was a Ruggles Rotary Plow (Peckham Truck Co.). There was also a single truck open car used as a maintenance-of-the-way car and, apparently was also infrequently used to transport passengers. I can find no manufacturer for the open - perhaps “home brew” but no data.

The rotary plow tended to damage the track as well as adjacent structures by striking them with ice and debris. This to an extent that the state’s public service board eventually suggested that a different plow be used - a V plow was acquired and the rotary consigned to storage on a stub track until its eventual scrapping in the late ‘20s or early ‘30s.



No. #1 Combine in later life - Wason Company (c 1897)

A somewhat dramatic feature of the line was an 800 ft. wood trestle, 60 ft. in height at its highest point, towards the southern end of the line. This trestle was sturdy enough to support a leased 4-4-0 steam engine and work cars used during the line’s construction. Another feature was the use of the traditional “golden spike” to complete the line. Two local men with gold panning experience from the California gold rush panned enough gold from

a local stream (Gold Brook) to plate a spike for the ceremony of the line's completion.

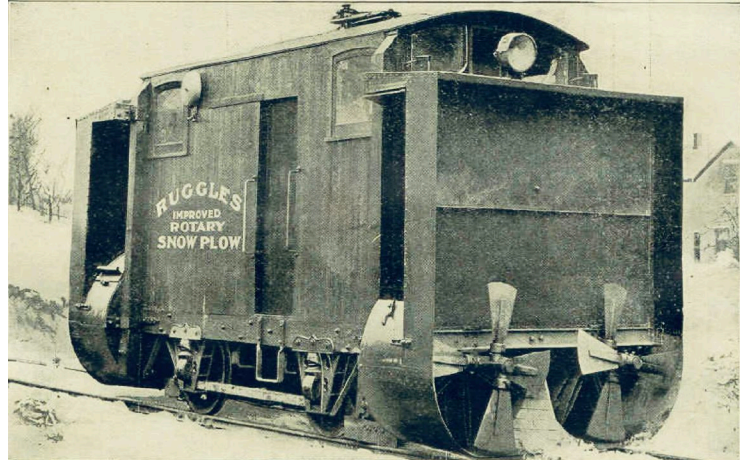


No. #3 Combine - Wason Company (c1897)  
at starting point in home town

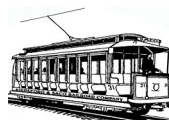
Although initially popular, but never overly profitable, the growth of automobile and truck competition that came with improved highways soon cut into the railroad's business. Bankruptcy came in 1907 with a subsequent reorganization. The railroad began supplementing its rail service with a 15

passenger Graham Brothers Truck Company (Graham-Dodge) bus in 1929. Our line ultimately failed in 1932 with the right-of-way being transferred to the state and becoming the first concrete road in the state.

The railroad applied for and was granted authority to operate bus and truck services between its former rail endpoint towns. The railroad's bus operation seems to have disappeared quite soon although in the mid-50s a bus line served the route but apparently not owned by the railroad corporation. The truck operations extended into the late 1950s or early '60s. One source says the corporation was dissolved in 1959 and another claims trucks operated until 1963.



Ruggles Rotary Plow - Wason Company (c 1898)  
Peckham Truck Co.



Library Committee



Library Committee

The next Library Committee meeting and workshop is scheduled on March 8, 2025 from 10AM -2PM.

The Library Committee's meetings on Saturdays are held from 10AM - 2PM 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 standalone workshops from 10 AM-2 PM on the even months. Start times are adjusted seasonally - 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).

Meeting Dates for 2025 with Business Meeting followed by workshop:  
Mar 8; May 10; July 12; Sept 13; Nov 8

Workshop Dates for 2025: Apr 12; June14; Aug 9 ; Oct 11; Dec 13

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 has uploaded 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) . You can also find the most recent (18 +/-) issues on the museum's website at: <https://trolleymuseum.org/seashore-trolley-museum-library/library-newsletter/> Note: The most recent issue generally is available on the above site within two or three days of publication.

Regards,

Ed Ramsdell, Editor

*The Main Line*

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

<http://www.trolleymuseum.org>



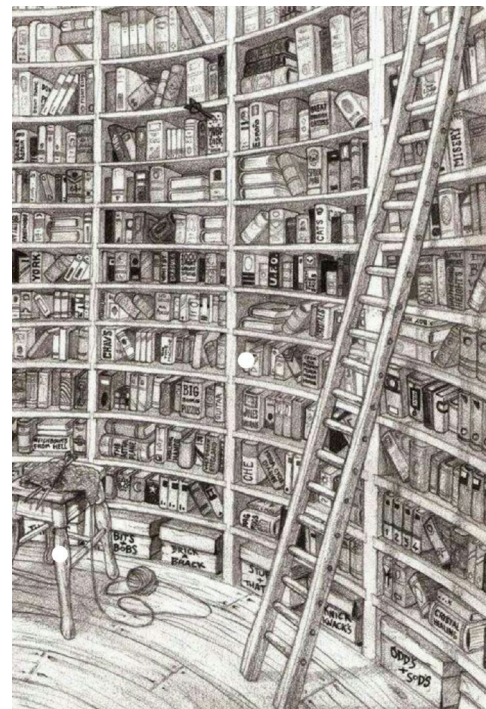
## Wandering through the collection -

### Not All Crystal Balls Are Created Equal!

In seeking to distract myself from getting any work done I, yet again, started wandering through trade publications of a hundred or so years ago (110 to be specific).

In looking through *The Electric Railway Journal*, Vol XLVI - July - December 1915 the following-

The publication was taking vehement exception to statements made by some individuals suggesting that the motor bus was any real threat to the electric railway - in fact the ERJ described the motor bus as “this over-exploited and apparently extravagant method of transporting passengers”.



Note: In fact, to give the ERJ its due - according to the US National Transit database it was 1940 before urban bus ridership exceeded that of electric railways.

## JITNEY-BUS COMPETITION

We are wholly unable to agree with the expression of belief in the importance of the motor-bus as a competitor to the electric railway, which appears on another page of this issue, notwithstanding our respect for the opinions of its author. Undoubtedly the itinerant jitney has made serious holes in the gross earnings of a number of properties, but that fact certainly does not constitute a valid reason why the electric railway should enter the bus business with a view to recouping its losses. We have followed with the utmost care—even with a certain amount of natural anxiety—the whole of the short history of the motor-bus movement in this country, and as it stands at present the situation may be summed up in one sentence: Nowhere have there been given out any authentic records of the actual operation of motor-buses which show them to be nearly as efficient, including all costs and all factors, as are electric cars.

The author expresses fear that organized capital might engage in the business and make greater inroads into the trolley receipts than the unorganized jitney competition, but there is even less danger of this, we believe, than from the itinerant jitney. The regular bus is at a disadvantage in some respects as a traffic getter, compared with the second-hand touring car. In the first place, with the increased number of passengers more stops have to be made, and the bus cannot compete in speed with the smaller vehicle. Again, the bus does not appeal so strongly to the man who does not own an automobile as does the touring car. We have always maintained that one of the reasons which impelled some people to use the jitneys was the appearance of affluence which it gave, and this is shown by the requests often made by passengers to the driver to remove his route sign. Finally, there is no such supply of second-hand motor-buses as there is of second-hand touring cars, so that the investment required to establish a line of buses is very much greater.

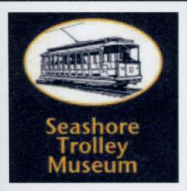
Organized capital has attempted to establish 5-cent motor-bus lines in various cities, but we know of no place where they have proved at all successful. In both Pittsburgh and Los Angeles the service has been abandoned, and last week the news came from Washington that a receiver had been appointed for the Metropolitan Coach Company of that city. Of these installations it is hard to imagine any two cities in the country where the natural conditions in the way of climate, low grades and good paving are more favorable to the operation of motor-bus lines than Los Angeles and Washington.

The sale of the Los Angeles buses was mentioned in this paper several months ago. In reply to a creditor's petition for a receiver in the Washington case the com-

pany admitted its insolvency. It has never made expenses at any time during three years of operation. It was not a fly-by-night undertaking equipped with second-hand cars. It was a company operating six eighteen-passenger buses of good design over a route from Fifteenth Street and Pennsylvania Avenue (a departmental, business and hotel center) to Sixteenth and U Streets, traversing one of the best residence districts of the city. The maximum haul for a 5-cent or six-for-a-quarter fare was  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles. The traffic has amounted to as many as 65,000 cash passengers a month. But the line could not be made to pay even with the most economical, not to say parsimonious, management. There is no mystery about the outcome of this experiment. It is due simply to the fact that it cost more to carry passengers than was collected for the service. What makes the Washington bus failure especially impressive is the fact that the enterprise was well backed financially and had a particularly good route. If success could not be achieved under these circumstances it would be hard to find a situation that would justify the hope of profit in jitney operation.

There is a profitable bus line in New York City. But this charges a 10-cent fare in a restricted and highly-profitable territory, and if there is another successful city bus company of reasonable size elsewhere in the country, the fact of its existence has never been published. Indeed, until someone is able to make actual, not paper, profits with buses at the 5-cent fare charged by city railways, or to serve rural districts at the same speeds and at the same fares that have been established by the interurbans, we refuse absolutely to be stampeded by the spectacular features of the motor-bus. When its advocates can point to definite results that show it to be cheaper to operate than the electric car there may be some grounds for the consideration of bus operation in general by electric railways. Until that time arrives, however, we can only reiterate a warning against taking up this over-exploited and apparently extravagant method of transporting passengers.






# 2025 Season Events!

195 Log Cabin Road | Kennebunkport, Maine

Open 9:30AM-4:30PM on  
Wednesday—Sunday from  
June 1 thru October 26 and  
weekends in May and  
December.

## May

 = Experience our Pump Car!

- Saturday, May 3<sup>rd</sup>: Opening Day & Maine Day!** Admission for Maine residents is \$2.07; youth 16 and under are free.
- Sunday, May 4<sup>th</sup>: May The 4th Be With You Day.** Come dressed as your favorite Star Wars character and get free admission.
- Saturday, May 10<sup>th</sup> Dress Like a Conductor Day.** Youth ages 16 and under who dress like a conductor get free admission!
- Sunday, May 11<sup>th</sup>: Mother's Day.** Mothers admissions are free! Behind the Scenes Shop Tours will be offered from 11AM—1PM.
- Saturday, May 17<sup>th</sup> and May 24<sup>th</sup> - May 25<sup>th</sup>: Military Appreciation Days.** Active duty military personnel and veterans' admissions are free!

## June

- Saturday, June 7<sup>th</sup>: Speeder Day!** Take a ride on one of several Speeders visiting Seashore for the day.
- Saturday, June 7<sup>th</sup> Pride Day.** \$3 from each ticket sold this weekend will benefit local LGBTQ+ nonprofits.
- Sunday, June 8<sup>th</sup>: Dog Appreciation Day.** Dogs are welcome every day at the Museum; come today for special dog-friendly door prizes!
- Saturday-Sunday, June 14<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup>: "I've Driven By Several Times But I've Never Been Down the Driveway" Days.** Free admission to York County, Maine residents who have never been to our museum.
- Sunday, June 15<sup>th</sup>: Father's Day.** Fathers' admissions are free! Behind the Scenes Shop Tours will be offered at 11AM and 1PM.
- Saturday, June 21<sup>st</sup>: New Hampshire Day.** To honor New Hampshire's statehood anniversary, car 38 and City of Manchester will be featured. Residents of NH get in for \$6.03! (All children 16 and under are free).
- Saturday-Sunday, June 28<sup>th</sup>-29<sup>th</sup>: Dino Trolley!** A Seashore fan favorite for youth of all ages. Admission includes several dino-themed activities across campus and a 2D dino hunt on our railway.

## Wednesdays in July & August Ice Cream Night!

Join us from 5:30PM-7PM for ice cream sundaes and a trolley ride! Admission is only \$12/per person; children 2 and under are free. We partner with a different nonprofit from our community at each Ice Cream Night, and they will get 50% of the proceeds! Check out our website Event Calendar for a list of benefiting nonprofits.

## July

- Saturday, July 5<sup>th</sup>: Happy Birthday Seashore** Celebrate our 86th birthday with treats and docent-guided tours.
- Sunday, July 13<sup>th</sup>: Moxie Day.** Free samples of Moxie and Diet Moxie.
- Saturday-Sunday July 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup>: First Responder Days.** To show our appreciation, first responders' admission is free.
- Saturday-Sunday July 26<sup>th</sup>-27<sup>th</sup>: Daniel Tiger Visits Seashore!**

For more information, the most up-to-date schedule, and to purchase tickets, please visit [www.trolleymuseum.org](http://www.trolleymuseum.org)

## August

- Saturday-Sunday, August 9<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup>: Dino Trolley!** A Seashore fan favorite for youth of all ages. Admission includes several dino-themed activities across campus and a 2D dino hunt on our railway.
- Saturday, August 16<sup>th</sup>: Members Day & Open House.** Members have the opportunity to ride and operate cars in our collection and participate in special workshops! Admission is free for all guests.
- Sunday, August 24<sup>th</sup>: Ham Radio Day.** The York County Amateur Radio Club will be operating throughout the day. "Get on the air" and meet new radio friends from around the world!
- Saturday-Sunday, August 30<sup>th</sup>-31<sup>st</sup>: Model Railroad Weekend**

## September

- Saturday, September 6<sup>th</sup>: All Women Crew Day.** Celebrate the role women have played in transit history.
- Sunday, September 7<sup>th</sup>: Grandparent's Day.** Free admission for grandparents.
- Saturday-Sunday, September 13<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup>: Teacher Appreciation Days.** To show our appreciation, teachers' admission is free!
- Saturday, September 20<sup>th</sup>: Dog Appreciation Day.** Dogs are welcome every day at the Museum, but come today for special dog-friendly door prizes!
- Sunday, September 21<sup>st</sup>: Massachusetts Day.** MA residents are half off!

## Pumpkin Patch Trolley

Fridays-Sundays & Indigenous Peoples' Day  
September 26<sup>th</sup>-28<sup>th</sup> and October 3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> & October 17<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup>  
Ride a trolley to Seashore's Pumpkin Patch; all guests get to pick out a pumpkin. On Saturdays, Sundays, and Indigenous Peoples' Day enjoy fun, fall festive family games and activities for all ages!

## October

- Friday — Sunday October 24<sup>th</sup>-26<sup>th</sup>: Happy Trolleyween!** Trick-or-treat around campus and participate in our "ghost hunt" for a chance to win a free 2025 Family Membership! Costumes are encouraged.

## December

Friday-Sunday, December 5<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup>: Christmas Prelude Trolley Rides! Ride on heated, decked out trolleys, free hot chocolate, SANTA and more! Check out our website for the details as the event gets closer, and be sure to purchase tickets in advance of your visit.

### Regular Admission

Adults (ages 17 – 59): \$15.00  
Adults (ages 60+) and  
Children (ages 6-16): \$13.00  
Children (ages 3 – 5): \$7.00  
Children (ages 0-2): Free!

### Become a Member!

Individual Membership: \$50  
Youth up to age 18: \$25  
Plus 1 Guest & Family  
Memberships: \$80