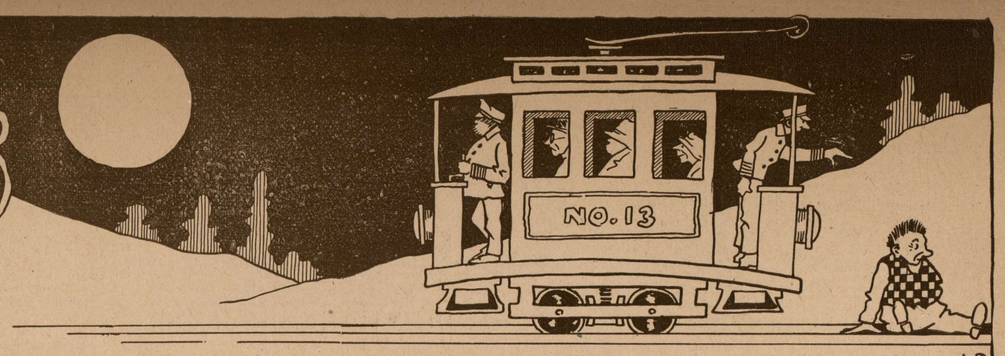
FROM HORSE CARS TO TROLLEY



ELECTRIC CAR HAS BEEN BIG FACTOR IN DEVELOPMENT OF COUNTY—

EASY MEANS OF COMMUNICATION AFFORDED HAS MADE IT POSSIBLE FOR THOUSANDS TO ENJOY PLEASURES OF SUBURBS—

Most of us remember the way folks were carried from place to place in horse cars, but today things are different, for the nation is welded together by a network of steel rails over which glide thousands of swiftly moving electric cars, carrying more than 14,000,000,000 passengers annually.

Back in 1887 weary horses and mules dragged the cars slowly along with passengers endeavoring to keep warm by putting their feet in straw on the floor. For tracks, narrow rails were fastened to pieces of wood, making the journey one of bumps. The cost of a horse car was $1200, and drivers were paid as low as 75 cents to $1.75 per day.

Today the electric car makes from eight to sixty miles an hour and is heated and lighted. Heavy steel rails securely fastened to strong ties inbedded in firm ballast insures a safe, comfortable ride and a modern electric car costs from $12,000 to $20,000, and employees wages have advanced 300 to 700 per cent.

It's a long step from the crude beginning of street railways to the modernly equipped systems of today.

There is a difference, too, between the mere passing of a car through the streets and the extensive mechanical and supervisory factors that stand back of that car and a thousand others, making possible their individual and co-ordinated operation.

Step on the Reisterstown car, the Towson-Catonsville car, the Pikesville car, the Overlea car, the Sparrows Point car, or any other running through Baltimore county and you are riding in a vehicle which is the product of three-quarters of a century of scientific thought.

It is moved by a herculean power. It is manned by members of an army of men in whose careful training no time or effort is spared. It represents the investment of great sums of money by citizens of today as well as of the past.

To reach Towson, the county seat of Baltimore county, folks had their first taste of a public conveyance in the stage coach, then came the slow, pokey horse cars, and now the speeding electric cars, and probably no factor has contributed more to the growth of this community than the electric car.

The lines of the United Railways and Electric Company, reaching out from the very heart of Baltimore city, extend in every direction into Baltimore county and, running on frequent schedules, furnish admirable means of transportation without which the county would be seriously handicapped in its progress.

The easy means of communication afforded by the various lines has made it possible for thousands whose business is in the city, to enjoy the pleasures of suburban or rural life, hence numerous developments have sprung up in recent years, popularizing the county immeasurably, enhancing values and increasing the desirability of further colonization.

It is a particularly noteworthy fact that the substantial homes of Baltimore county are owned and occupied not alone by the rich, but by all thrifty classes.

In some sections there are communities of palace-like structures which constitute the habitations of the wealthy, and there are less elaborate but still pretty residences of the well to do and of the moderate means people. Then there are the homes of the clerks and skilled artisans, surrounded by all the delights of country and suburban life, all made possible through the comfortable and quickly moving rapid transit lines into and out of the city.

It is perhaps not a matter of general knowledge, but Baltimore county holds the honor with Baltimore city of having shared the very first commercially successful electric railway line in America. To be exact, it was on the soil of this county that the tracks were laid and the first successful experiment in passenger traffic by electric motor power was made.

It was in 1885 that the test trip was made and it should be very interesting today, when electric transportation systems have reached such a state of perfection to know something about that first line.

The City and Suburban Railway Co. had been experimenting for some time with electricity as a motive power, and considering it had reached a stage of practicability, equipped one of its lines operating in this community with a three-rail system. The third rail, which was located centrally between the tracks, carried the current just as the trolley wire of today. Current was supplied by a 50 horse-power dynamo driven by a 35 horse-power engine, the power house being equipped with a second dynamo of like capacity, which was held in reserve..

The motor cars were separate from the cars in which passengers rode, the latter being coupled to the rear. Current was taken up in the motor car by a shoe sliding at the end of a lever.

The line was one and one-half miles in length and the speed attained by the cars was 12 miles an hour. Each motor car weighed 4500 pounds and was the invention of Leo Daft, of Jersey City.

The trailers in which passengers rode were taken from the Catonsville horse car line, being the largest cars of that type then in use.

But the exposed third rail proved an ever-present source of danger, and with the expensiveness of the service tended to discourage the permanency of the line under that system of operation, so that in a few years horses were again restored as motive power.

However, rapid strides were being made in the successful development of electricity as a motive power for street cars, and it was not very long after the third rail system was discarded that the over-head trolley system was being applied to various lines in both Baltimore City and Baltimore county.

So with the newly found motive power came growth and development, a closer relationship of all the people and the march toward progress.

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