

## Dad Worked the Trolleys

*Editor's Note: From time to time we will pass along stories relating to Portland's historic streetcar operations. Such tales help breathe life into old pictures and memorabilia. Here then are two incidents related to us by our friend Mrs. Betty Wright, whose father was a conductor for Portland Railway Light & Power Co. during the 1910's and 1920's, the peak trolley years:*

**M**y father Dave Wright, badge no. 294, worked out of PRL&P's Ankeny Carbarns, where

he broke in on the Mount Tabor Line among others. He recalled one embarrassing incident that occurred during his rookie days when his car had laid over on Southwest Third

Avenue downtown. Third and Second avenues between Yamhill and Morrison streets formed one of the city line "loops" in those days.

Dad got off to answer a call of nature. When he returned, he found his car amidst a line of trolleys, all apparently ready to depart. He quickly jumped aboard and gave the bell cord a professional pull. The car trundled off in response, and he began collecting fares. But at the east end of the Morrison Bridge he noticed something was amiss.

A quick glance out the window revealed that, after crossing the river, his trolley had turned south and was headed down Grand Avenue.



*This photograph, taken at the intersection of SW 3<sup>rd</sup> and Morrison during the 1905 Lewis and Clark Exposition, shows Portland streets crowded with streetcars. In the center a carman is crossing the street in front of a Brooklyn Line car while, on the right, a string of open cars boards passengers for a kitchen range convention at the fair*

### SPECIAL MEETING ANNOUNCEMENT

The next member's meeting will be held on Wednesday, March 2nd, beginning at 7:30 pm. Location will be the Columbia Gorge Model Railroad Club, 3405 N. Montana, Portland. This is in North Portland, two blocks east of Interstate Avenue. In place of the usual business meeting we will offer a special program which will include a tour of the club as well as slides and talks by our members on such timely topics as Banfield light rail plans. Time allowing, there will also be views of historic Portland streetcars courtesy of the Oregon Historical Society. All this, plus coffee and cookies! Please plan on attending. Your society needs ACTIVE members, and your officers are responding to requests for different meeting times, days, locations, and an entertaining format. See you there...

*The Trolley Park News* is published monthly by the OERHS and is available through membership in the Society. Send requests for information, or items for publication, to the Corresponding Secretary, Richard Thompson, 1836 N. Emerson, Portland, OR 97217.



Member Chuck Hayden was peering through tombstones when he took this atmospheric snapshot of inbound Mount Tabor car 572 trundling along the private right-of-way adjacent to historic Lone Fir Cemetery.

Dad rushed into the vestibule to warn the motorman that they were headed the wrong way only to discover that the man at the controller was NOT his partner! Imagine his feeling when he glanced up at the destination sign and found that he was on a Brooklyn car, not a Mount Tabor.

Trolleys all looked pretty much alike in those years, and Dad had boarded the wrong one. A simple mistake perhaps, but one he had trouble living down back at the barn for years to come.

Dad also told me about the time his car struck a body when travelling next to Lone Fir Cemetery on the Mount Tabor Line. The motorman spotted a form draped across the rails and applied the brakes. But he couldn't stop the car fast enough to avoid a collision. Fortunately, the Nelson Safety fender installed on all cars after 1912 saved the body from being run over.

When the crew and passengers rushed out to save the poor person on the track they discovered that the trolley had hit a corpse! Apparently,

the person, long dead, had been unceremoniously dumped near the cemetery, from where it had rolled down onto the tracks. Those must have been rough times. 🚃

## Break in at the Trolley Park

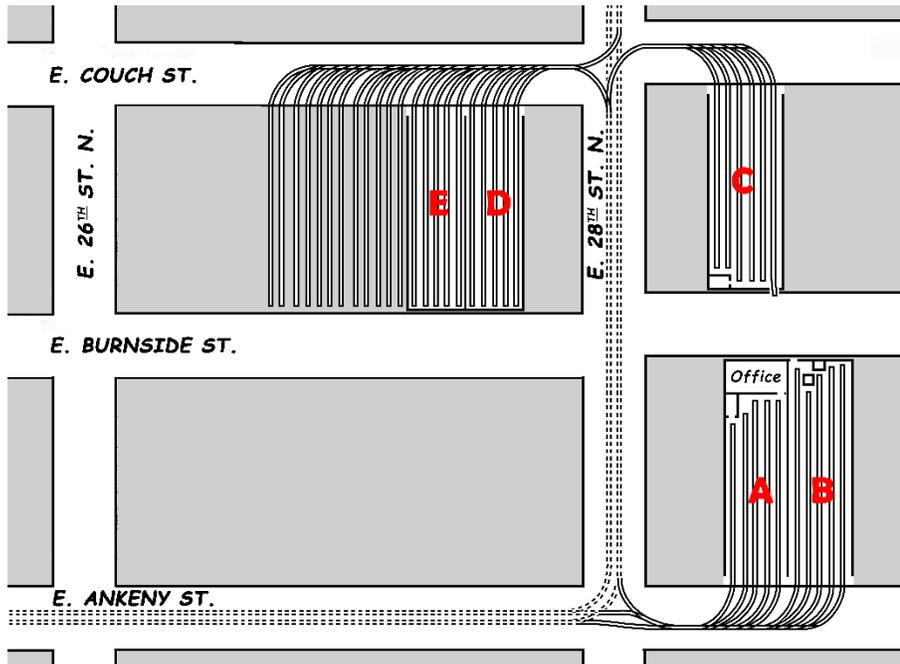
The first week of February saw our Comprehensive Employment Training Act (CETA) people, the Hogans, off to greener pastures and a new watchman appointed in their place. Unfortunately, during the interim period between crews, the Park was broken into.

No details are yet available, except to say that the shop door had been bent open (size of the opening suggests children) yet no theft or vandalism has been found. In the meantime, Paul Class hurried home from St. Louis and personally supervised the installation of new staff and security measures. Things have subsequently quieted down again, and Paul has returned to his streetcar projects. 🚃



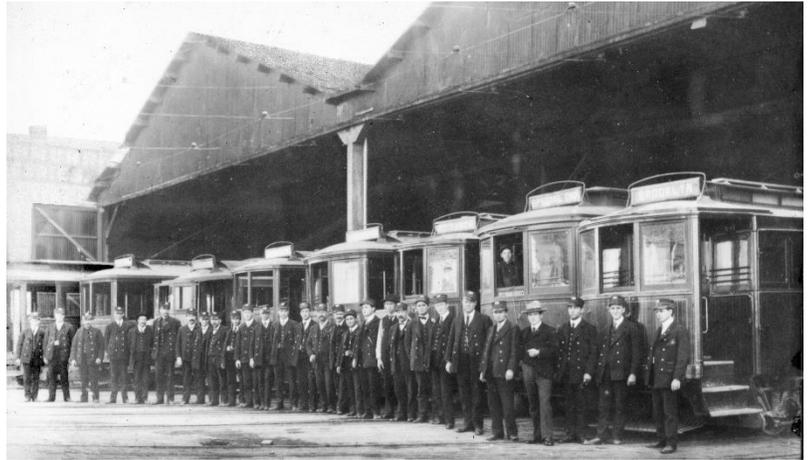
A dummy is used for training motormen on the use of a Nelson Safety Fender (like the one mentioned in Betty Wright's story) in a picture taken at NW 26<sup>th</sup> and Upsbur in 1912 after a city ordinance required safety fenders on all city streetcars. (Albert Reck Collection)

## THE ANKENY CARBARN 1894-1951



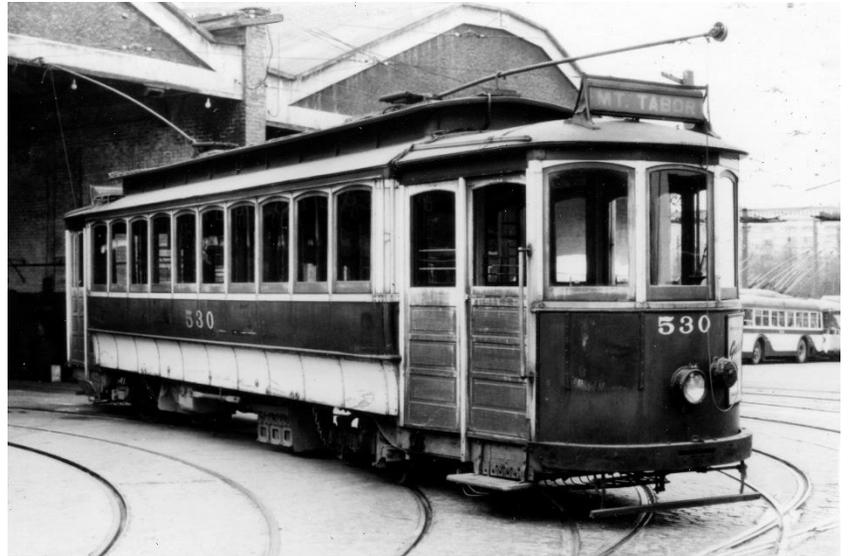
This map of the Ankeny Car Barn shows the complex at its peak, following additions made during 1910-11 by PRL&P. This three-barn facility replaced an earlier East Ankeny Carhouse, located four blocks west on Ankeny at 24<sup>th</sup>, that was destroyed in an 1894 fire. The first barn at the new location was razed and replaced by the barn with bay C in 1910. Earlier that year a barn including bays A and B was built on E. Ankeny Street. In 1911 another barn, comprising bays D and E, was completed on Couch, next to a 135 ft. wide yard.

Eight 100-series C & S “standards” and their crews pose in front of the original corrugated metal East Ankeny Car barn around 1905. This two-bay barn, built by the City & Suburban Railway Co. in 1894, was replaced by a narrower one-bay brick barn in 1910. Based on the direction the ladder tracks turn, this barn may have faced East Burnside or NE 28<sup>th</sup> rather than NE Couch.



This early interior view of the barn located between Burnside and Couch near SE 28<sup>th</sup> was taken during the early PRL&P years. At left, No. 97 is in front of a 400-class trolley and two open cars. Cars 118 and 128 are in the center, and No. 132 (with an East Burnside Street destination sign) is at right. Both ends of this barn appear to have been open.

Tired-looking Mount Tabor car 530 is outside Ankeny Carbarn Bay D on NE Couch Street in a picture taken around the time the last streetcar service on the east side was discontinued in 1948. The barn housing bays D and E was the last new addition to the complex, having been constructed in 1911, and remnants of it survive today. Note the trolley buses parked in the yard in the background. Four trolley coach lines operated out of the Ankeny Division between 1936 and 1951.



This view of the Ankeny Division office was taken in 1947. In the background is the counter where crews signed in and out (note the stacked fareboxes). The tables, chairs, and pool table, were part of what would formerly have been called the employees' "club." The employee lockers are out of sight behind the photographer. Crews nicknamed the Ankeny Carbarn complex "the Agony Barn," but were sad to see it go. The division was formally closed on June 15, 1951 when headquarters were relocated

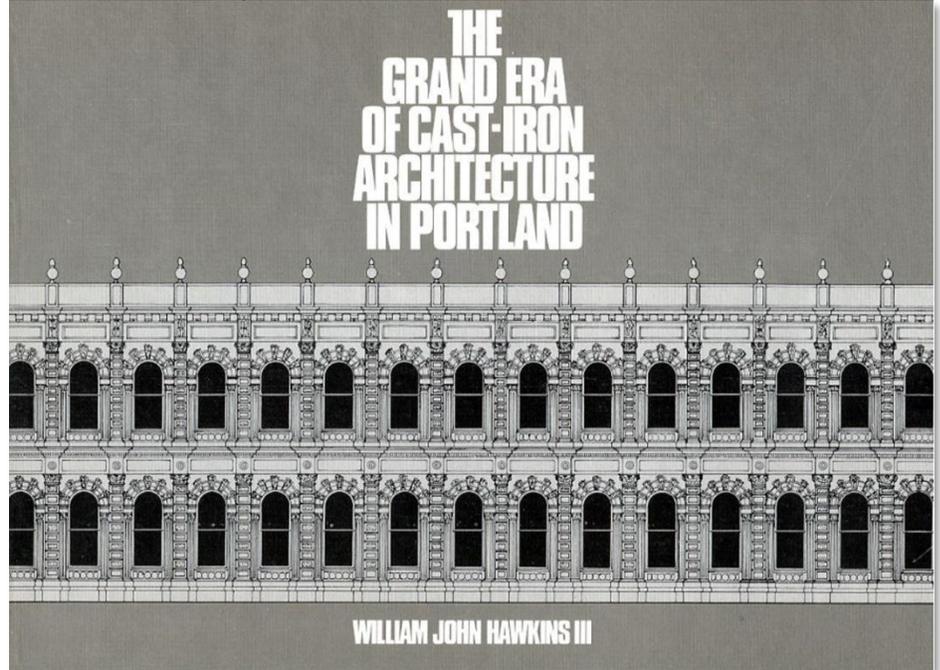
This late 1940s slide shows bays A and B at the Ankeny Carbarn located on the block bounded by SE Ankeny Street, East Burnside Street and SE 28<sup>th</sup> Avenue. Two large pay-as-you-enter cars are displaying different shades of red as they poke out of the sparsely populated barn. PAYE cars like this were the most common streetcar type in Portland.



## Reviews

**O**ld Portland by Fred DeWolfe (Press 22) \$4.95. This 82-page picture album of Portland's past contains 19 interesting views of streetcars or interurbans. These carefully chosen photographs are from private collections, as well as the Oregon Historical Society, University of Oregon, Portland Art Museum, and *The Oregonian*. Reproduction quality is good, but the captions are much too short.

*The Grand Era of Cast Iron Architecture in Portland* by William Hawkins III (Binford & Mort) \$18.95/\$24.95. This architectural history is, naturally, about buildings. Trolleys can be spotted in only a handful of photographs. However, the inclusion of a detailed map makes this a useful tool for those of us who might attempt to identify traction photos in our own



collections from buildings in the background. 🚃

the light rail option, which had been quietly ignored by ODOT during their 1-80N/1-205 interchange studies, has once more been revived.

Although it may surprise members to learn that Tri-Met is behind this reincarnation, a study done for them by Smith & Associates revealed that the adoption of light rail would, in the long run, prove more economical than busways.

The proposed light rail system would cost \$98 million versus \$84 million for buses. But light rail would move twice as many people (5000 to 8000/hour during rush hours) and last twice as long.

The operation is anticipated to require 27 light rail vehicles, which would probably be German-built and cost about \$700,000 apiece. That high vehicle cost is expected to be offset by much lower annual operating costs than now being experienced with buses. 🚃

## Banfield Plans will Include Light Rail

**O**n Monday, Feb. 7th the Tri-Met board voted to ask the Oregon Department of Transportation and the Columbia Region of Governments to include light rail among the alternatives being studied as solutions to traffic congestion on the Banfield Freeway (1-80N). Thus,

