



Reminder to members: Please be sure your dues are up to date. They are due on Jan 1. If you have not renewed you can pay online, or download a membership form, at <http://oregontrolley.com/join>

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Boise Streetcar & Interurban History

By Mark Kavanagh



A man on the roof hoists a banner as Boise Valley Railway Company No. 200 and a sister make ready to depart with a Trustee Company Apple Blossom Excursion on May 5, 1912. In the background are the Aloha apartments at left and the Sherman House in the center. (TAG Historical Research & Consulting)

This continues the series of articles in my quest to document living remnants of our nation’s traction past. I find it amazing that so much is still around. Boise is no exception. I had published an article on Boise in the December 1996 *Transfer*, but it did not go into too much detail. Here we will do a bit more exploration and a modern-day tour of the former system.

The Shoshone native tribes initially settled in the Boise area. Explores and traders started coming through in the early 1800s. It is thought that French-Canadian fur-trappers named

the area along the river Les Bois, as the river was tree-lined here in an area of very little vegetation. Les Bois translated to “wooded” in French, and later it just became Boise. Gold was discovered around 1860, and the area quickly flooded with settlers. In 1864 it was incorporated into a city and became the territorial Capital.

Gold soon was history, but farming took over. In 1890, Idaho became a state with Boise continuing as its capital.

Continued on page 3

Oregon Electric Railway Historical Society

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Membership

If you have overlooked paying your dues for 2020 or did not realize that 2021 dues come due on Jan. 1 this is your reminder. Memberships should be renewed on January 1st each year. The OERHS is a non-profit 501-C-3 corporation, so dues are tax deductible.

Categories

Active	\$ 30	Sustaining	\$ 250
Family	\$ 60	Life	\$ 500
Contributing	\$ 75	Benefactor	\$ 1000
Supporting	\$100		

Mission Statement

The mission of the Oregon Electric Railway Historical Society, Inc. is to preserve the regional heritage of electric railway transportation as a living resource for the benefit of the present and future generations.

To fulfill this mission the Society will promote:

- The study of electric railways, their physical equipment, properties, and operations, devoting special attention to the electric railways of western Oregon.
- The procurement and preservation of historic electric railway equipment, materials and property.
- The display, interpretation and operation of surviving historic equipment, materials and properties.

By Laws, Article II, 9/14/93

Official Notice

The Transfer is published quarterly as the official publication of the OERHS, a state and federally recognized not-for-profit institution and operator of the Oregon Electric Railway Museum at Brooks, Oregon and the Willamette Shore Trolley between Lake Oswego and Portland.

The views expressed herein are solely those of the individual writers identified and of the editor only, and may not necessarily represent the views or policies of the Society, its Board of Trustees, Officers or Members.

Articles, photos and letters for publication are always welcome. Please email to transfer@oerhs.org or postal mail to the museum address below.

Please send any change of address, your dues, and donations to:

Oregon Electric Railway Historical Society
3995 Brooklake Rd. NE
Brooks, OR 97303
Phone: 971-701-6327
www.oregontrolley.com

Do you want to drive a trolley?

You can be a Motorman, Conductor, Tour Guide, help restore trolleys or participate in more great activities. Want to learn to operate a 100-year-old trolley or an electric locomotive? If you are interested in training to be a motorman, conductor, or station agent at the museum contact Greg Bonn at (971) 344-0755. If you wish to volunteer for the Willamette Shore Trolley, call David Harold or Jan Zweekerts at (503) 697-7436. No experience is necessary just a passion for trolleys! We can train you in any volunteer position that meets your interest.

Volunteers are also needed for weekday or Saturday projects at the museum in Brooks. Please come out to the museum and lend a hand. Call Greg Bonn for details at (971) 344-0755.

How we deliver *The Transfer* and *The Monthly Pass*

Our quarterly newsletter *The Transfer* is published electronically in full high-resolution color. Members can view and download current and previous issues at the OERHS website: oregontrolley.com/transfer. You will also find an archive here of previous issues going back to the 1970s. It is easy to print copies on your personal color or black & white printer. By default, members receive email notification as soon as an issue is available. We believe you will appreciate the higher quality pictures that this process will provide to all the interesting photos that accompany our articles.

For those who prefer a printed copy of *The Transfer* a black and white version will be mailed to your home address by request. Please send this preference to Secretary Mark Kavanagh, Oregon Electric Railway Historical Society, 3995 Brooklake Rd. NE, Brooks, OR 97303 or send him an email at mark@oerhs.org.

When needed, the OERHS also updates members on events at the Oregon Electric Museum and the Willamette Shore Trolley in a short email newsletter called *The Monthly Pass*. We must have your correct email address for distribution of both newsletters. We respect your privacy and will only use your email address to send a single notification when the latest issue of *The Transfer* is ready. We do not send promotional material or advertising.

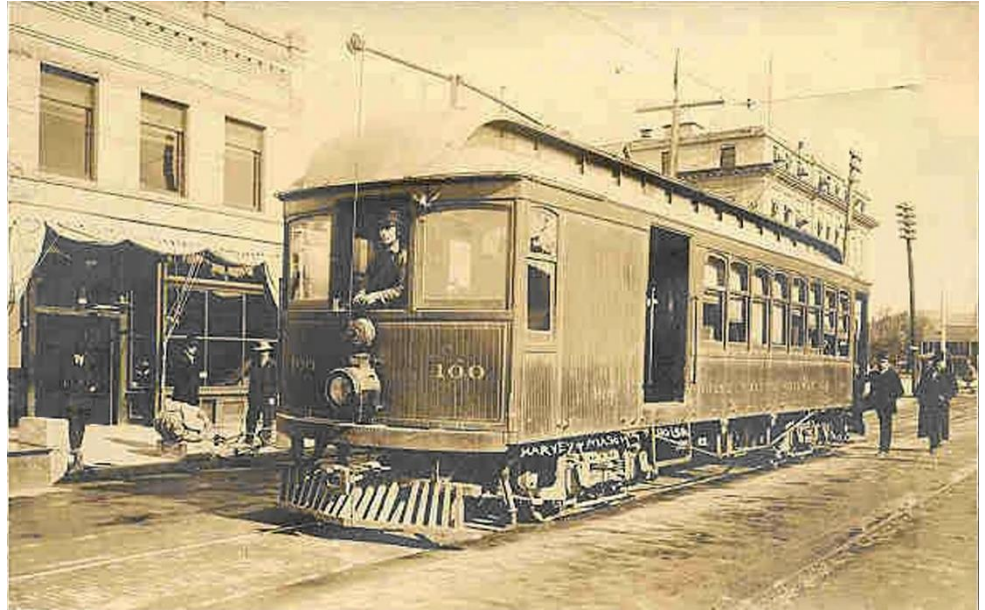
Boise Streetcars

from p. 1

As in many other American cities of the period, it became a matter of civic pride that a trolley system be developed. In 1890, the Boise Rapid Transit (BRT) was formed.

On August 23rd, 1891, the first passengers boarded the electric streetcar *Boise* to head up Main Street and Warm Springs Avenue. With the advent of the streetcar new buildings went up downtown and the Natarorium hot springs resort was built at the end of the Line on Warm Springs Avenue. By 1903, when the BRT was dissolved, six miles of city streetcar line had been built.

The BRT became the Boise Traction Company and later the Boise Valley Railway Company (BVRC). In 1905, W.E. Pierce started a competitor company, the Boise & Interurban Railway (B&I). Both companies had plans to link Boise with other cities such as Nampa and Caldwell. The B&I was built to Caldwell via the northern route (north of the Boise River), fully opening in 1909. The BVRC built the southern



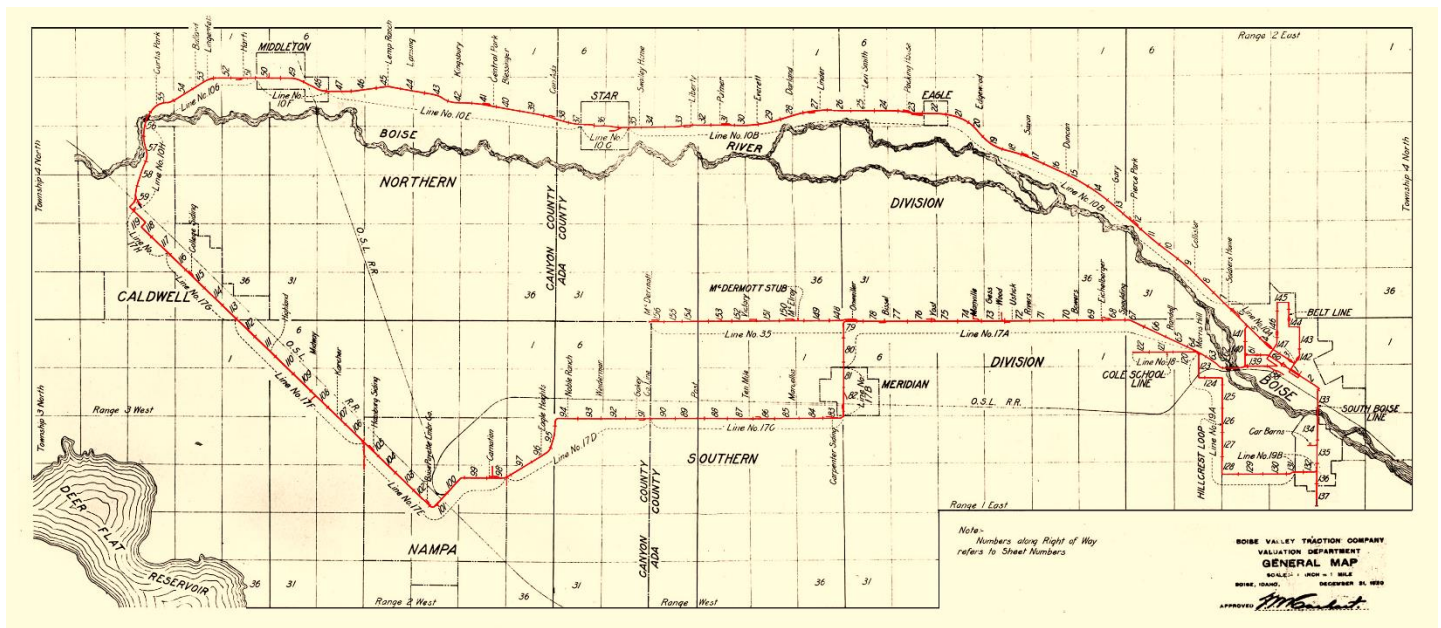
Boise Valley Railway Company combination passenger and freight car No. 100 is loading passengers in front of the Boise depot on the corner of 8th and Bannock streets. Car 100 was a 1907 product of the American Car Company in St. Louis. (Hugh and Bob Hartman collection)

route to Nampa, completing it in 1910. The two systems were linked in 1912, completing a loop around the Treasure Valley. The two companies soon merged. Cities and small towns all along the way now had clean and dependable transportation to Boise.

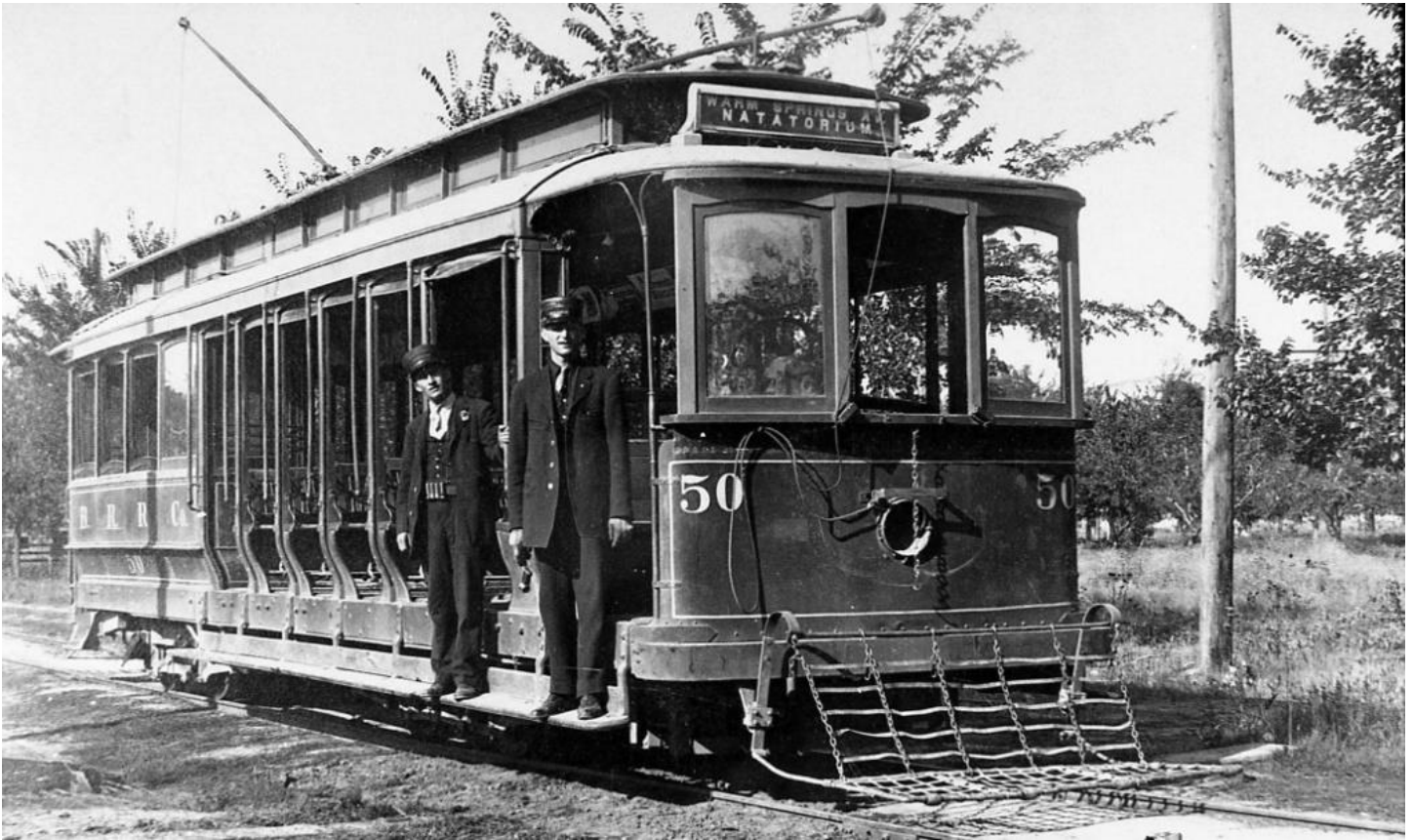
The B&I in 1910, opened Pierce Park (named after its owner) for

recreational use to encourage day-trippers to ride the interurban. As it turned out, on weekends, it also became popular to ride the Interurban Loop around the valley for pleasure. In 1915, the system became the Boise Valley Traction Company (BVTC).

Continued on page 4



This 1920 map shows stops and stations along the Boise Valley interurban loop. The northern part of the loop opened between Boise and Caldwell in 1909. The southern portion was completed in 1910. When linked in 1912 each half of the loop was approximately 35 miles in length.



Boise Railroad Company California style car No. 50 is seen on the Warm Springs Avenue Line which ran 2.5 miles eastward to the hot springs resort and Natatorium that opened in May 1892. (Hugh and Bob Hartman Collection).

The Boise Valley Traction Company was profitable through WWI, but by the early 1920s trucks and cars had started to siphon away passengers and goods. Soon investors were not happy with the dwindling fortunes of their electric railway.

Interurban passenger service ended in 1928. Freight service continued until 1930. The interurban had outlasted the streetcars in Boise City

Boise passed an ordinance allowing discontinuance of city streetcars in 1919. Over time, buses would replace trolleys there.

What is left today? See follow-up article “Boise Streetcar Remnants” beginning on page 7. 🚋



An unidentified semi-convertible car struggles through snow on Idaho Street in Boise on a winter day in 1915. (TAG Historical Research & Consulting)



Boise Traction car 30 passing the Idanha Hotel at 10th and Main streets in Boise. Predecessor Boise Rapid Transit Company began streetcar operation with American Car Co. single truckers like this in 1890. (TAG Historical Research)

BOISE VALLEY RY. Co.
TIME CARD
 IN EFFECT
 SEPTEMBER 11, 1910

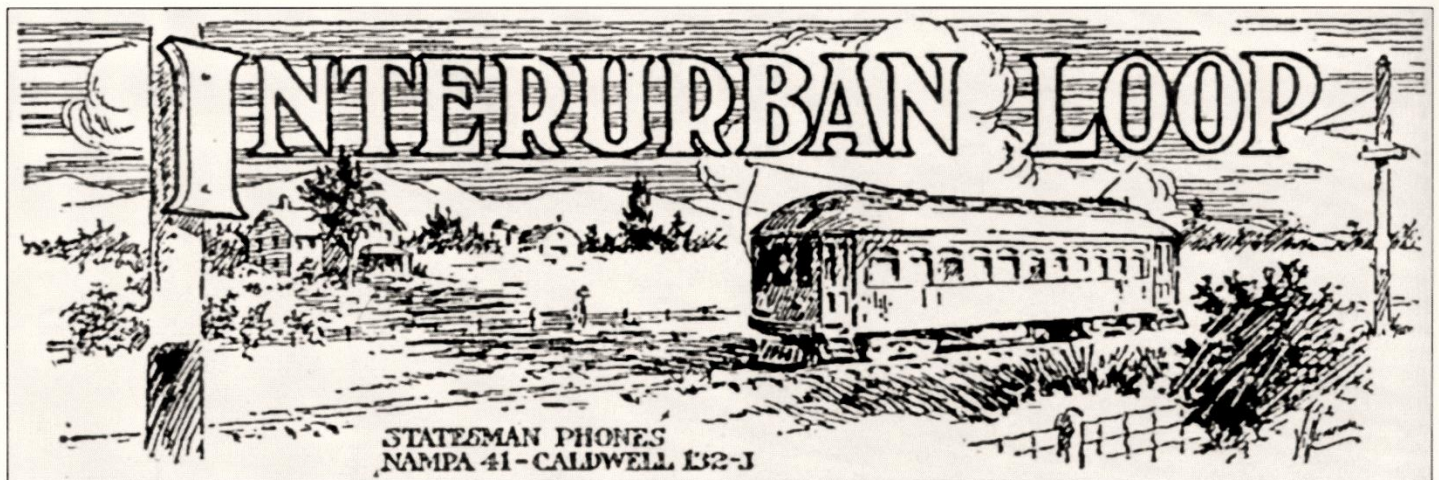
**“The Boise, Nampa
 and Meridian
 Route”**

GENERAL OFFICE
 808 BANNOCK STREET

NAMPA OFFICE
 OPPOSITE DEWEY PALACE

MERIDIAN OFFICE
 RICE'S PHARMACY

↓ The Idaho Statesman published news stories from towns along the interurban loop beneath this artistic heading.

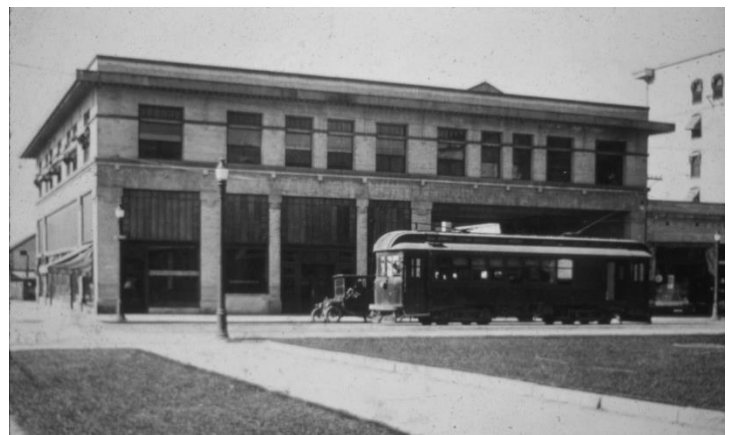




Boise & Interurban car 3 is inside the Boise depot. Trolleys passed through the concourse from Bannock Street to the Seventh Street side of the depot. The front banner reads "Don't miss the aviation meet at Boise Apr. 19th and 20th." (TAG Historical Research & Consulting)



College Heights Station, aka "The Hat," in 1914. The well-preserved former station is still a college landmark today. (Robert Smiley Archives, College of Idaho)



Combine No. 7 in front of Meridian passenger & freight station in May 1919. A waiting room, newsstand, and smoking room were on the main floor. Offices and crew room were upstairs. (Meridian Historical Society)



Meridian station at the corner of N. Meridian Road and East Idaho Avenue now serves as college classrooms. (Mark Kavanagh photograph).

Boise Streetcar Remnants

Mark Kavanagh

In the late summer of 2020, my wife and I took our dog on a road trip around the perimeter of Oregon, with Boise as the major destination where we spent a few nights.

On one of the days we drove the entire loop of the Boise & Interurban Railway. We started from the south side of Boise and went through Meriden, Nampa, and Caldwell. We continued across the Boise River through the communities of Star, Middleton and back to Boise. All of these communities grew up with the interurban. It is amazing that so much is left to see.

Our first stop was Meridian. The line from Boise had been running from Boise, about halfway between the river and today’s I-84. At Meridian, the line turned a bit south to get to Nampa. In Meridian, the old Meridian station is at the corner of N Meridian Road and E. Idaho Ave.

Although you cannot tell it by the exterior, it has been modified over the years. Today it is part of a college.

In Nampa, nothing is left of the line. However, I do recommend stopping to admire the old Oregon Short Line RR depot in downtown.

The next stop was Caldwell, where a former trolley shelter is maintained at the entrance to the College of Idaho. The shelter is affectionately called “The Hat” based on its construction. It is located on Cleveland Blvd between S. 21st and S. 22nd Aves. The shelter was built by the Interurban Railway to serve the College and was called College Heights. After the railway quit university students kept it up. It has been moved from its original location but still sits proudly. Today buses still stop here. While in Caldwell, like Nampa, I recommend stopping by the old railroad depot downtown.

After Caldwell, the line starts to head north. The private RoW still exists as the line heads to cross the river. Part of it is a bike trail. As it gets closer to the river, it becomes off-limits as it provides access to the region’s water supply. I was unable to capture images, but the bridge abutments still remain in the river from the old rail line.

Next we headed east. The first main stop was Middleton. This was a major stop on the north end of the loop (the south side of the loop was, and is, much more developed). There are two items of interest at this former transfer point to the Idaho Northern Railroad. The original station remains, and next door is the old substation.



Middleton station, with the former substation next to it, is today home to the Lee Moberly Museum and Event Center. Lee Moberly was the Middleton postmaster and a local historian. (Mark Kavanagh photograph)

Today the two buildings are joined to form a museum and event space. Sadly, they were not open during our visit.

The next stop as we continued east was Star. A former interurban station remains in this small community. It is not quite in its original location but has been fully restored and repurposed as a coffee shop/café called Bobbie Jeans. We stopped for a snack (my wife had coffee and I had a beer) and found the interior of the shop still had the old railroad feel. It was originally a passenger and freight depot built on two levels — passengers on the lower level and freight on the higher level.

Continuing east into Boise, little remained of the interurban except occasional vestiges of right-of-way. In Boise, the old freight house still stands at the corner of W. Front St and S. 12th Street. But it is hard to tell what it was based on today’s view. It is now a hot glass studio and gallery.



The former Star station is now a coffee house called Bobbie Jeans Café. Star station was located halfway between Boise and Caldwell. (Mark Kavanagh photograph)



Warm Springs Station is now the Trolley House Restaurant, located on Warm Springs Street by the Natatorium. The building included a ticket office, offices, and possibly a small carbarn.. (Mark Kavanagh photograph)

Elsewhere in Boise, there were a couple of items to find from the old city streetcar system. The first, and the subject of my prior *Transfer* article,

was the Trolley House Restaurant. This was a terminal, and possibly a small carbarn, out in West Boise. This beautiful building and terminal was



Ivywild station, today part of Ivywild Park in South Boise, sports a trolley sculpture. (Mark Kavanagh photograph)

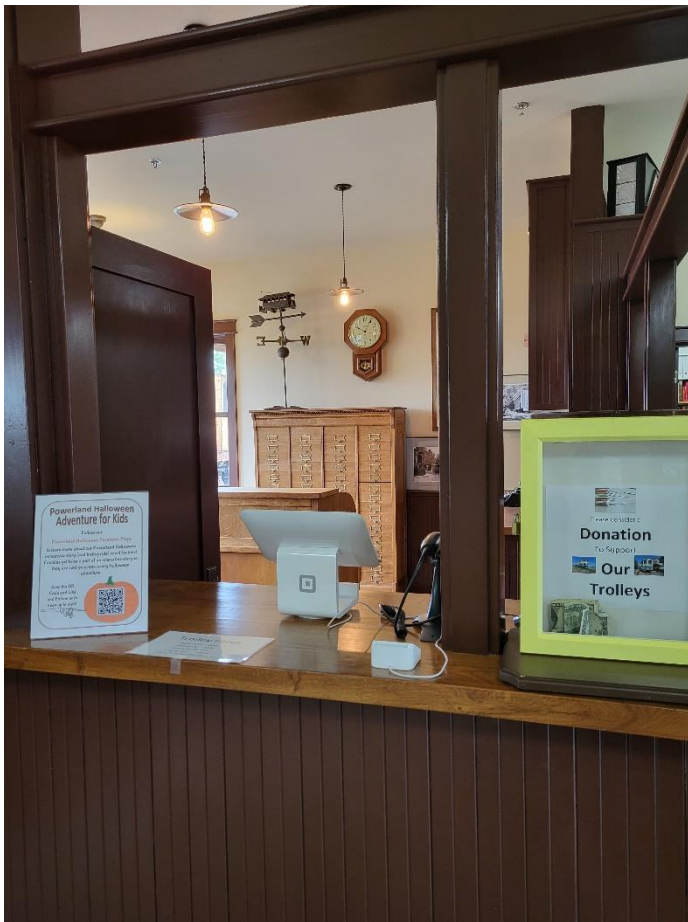
built to serve the Natatorium. The original Natatorium building no longer exists, but the outdoor city pool remains. An exterior wall of the restaurant has a trolley mural. Inside are photos of trolleys as well as other historic pictures of Boise. The restaurant is noted for their breakfast, which we did partake in on their dog-friendly patio. 🐕



The Boise Valley Traction Company's freight house located at W. Front and 12th streets is now home to Boise Art Glass, a glass blowing studio that is open to the public. Box motors and combination passenger and freight cars once did a lively business hauling freight over 78.5 miles of electric railway. (Mark Kavanagh photograph)



The old College Heights Station, affectionately nicknamed "The Hat," has been restored and is still in use as a transit stop adjacent the College of Idaho. The C of I, founded in 1891, is the state of Idaho's oldest private liberal arts college. It's alumni number seven Rhodes Scholars and three governors. Perhaps some of them rode the trolleys. (Mark Kavanagh photograph)



Our volunteers interact with riders and shoppers from the ticketing and sales office in Hopmere Station (Betty Ballentine photograph)

Gift Shop Updates from Hopmere Station and the Willamette Shore Line.

Suzi Jones

A few changes have been made at both of our locations. Through some different and unique additions to our inventory, great purchases and builds for specific furniture, the Gift Shops are looking great and appealing to our riders, with more emphasis on trolley history.

Using existing inventory repackaged for a more “museum-like” appeal, and new items, we opened the Hopmere Gift Shop in time for the first event of the season – Kid’s Day in mid-May.

Some of the new items for kids include “Shrink-A-Trolley,” “Color Book with Crayons,” and “Color Book

Box,” all with many images of trolleys. Three full color puzzles showcase our streetcars, including Vintage Trolley No. 513 on the Willamette Shore Line in Lake Oswego, Double decker No. 48, and Aussie open car No. 1187 at Hopmere Station in Brooks. There are also visors to personalize, 4th of July fun projects, and more.

Both locations showcase historical books about our beloved trolleys and their history in our area and throughout the state. A good example is Richard Thompson’s new book “St. Johns Streetcars: The Streetcars of North Portland,” which is prominently displayed. We will host a personal book signing by the author on July 30th, the first Saturday of Steam-Up.

Your Gift Shop Committee includes Betty Ballentine, Joyce Nagy, Greg Bonn, Corina Laws, Carolyn Vernon and me, Suzi Jones. We have received input from members too. Vicki and Gene Fabryka, Mark Kavanaugh, and John Nagy to name a few.

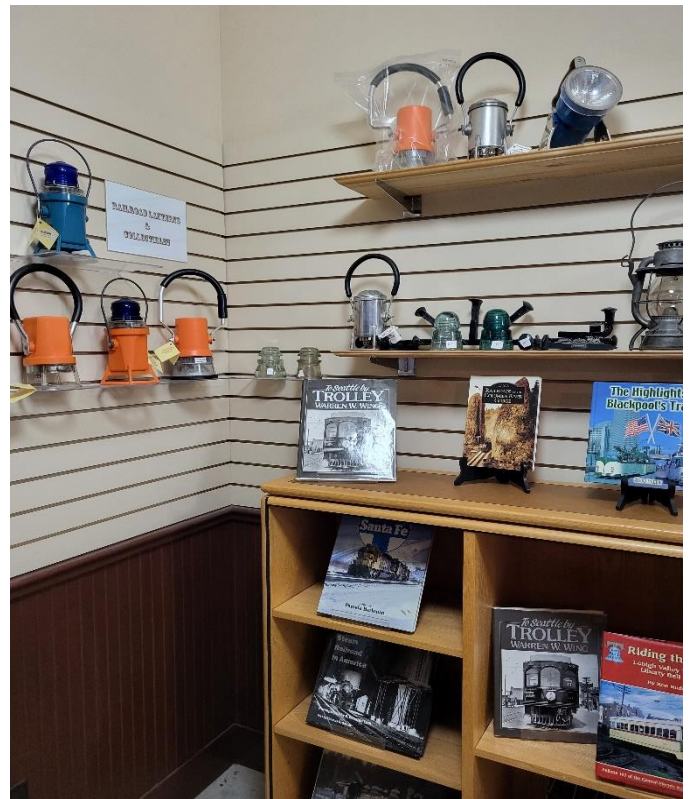
Come take a look, find a souvenir, and enjoy! 🚃



The Hopmere gift shop offers books focusing on electric railways, including Portland Traction, Pacific Electric, Los Angeles Railway, Sacramento Northern, and Yakima Valley (Betty Ballentine photo)



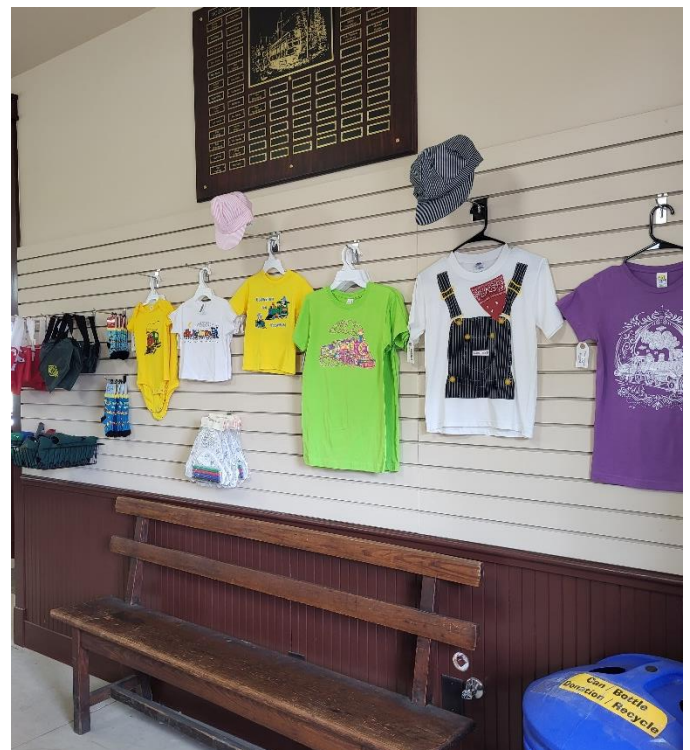
Model streetcars for sale at Hopmere station include British double-deckers, Chicago, and New York Birneys, and PCCs from Los Angeles MTA, Chicago CSL, and Boston MBTA. (Betty Ballentine photograph)



Vintage and modern railroad lanterns, glass insulators, and railroad spike art are among the collectibles available at the Hopmere station gift shop. (Betty Ballentine photograph)



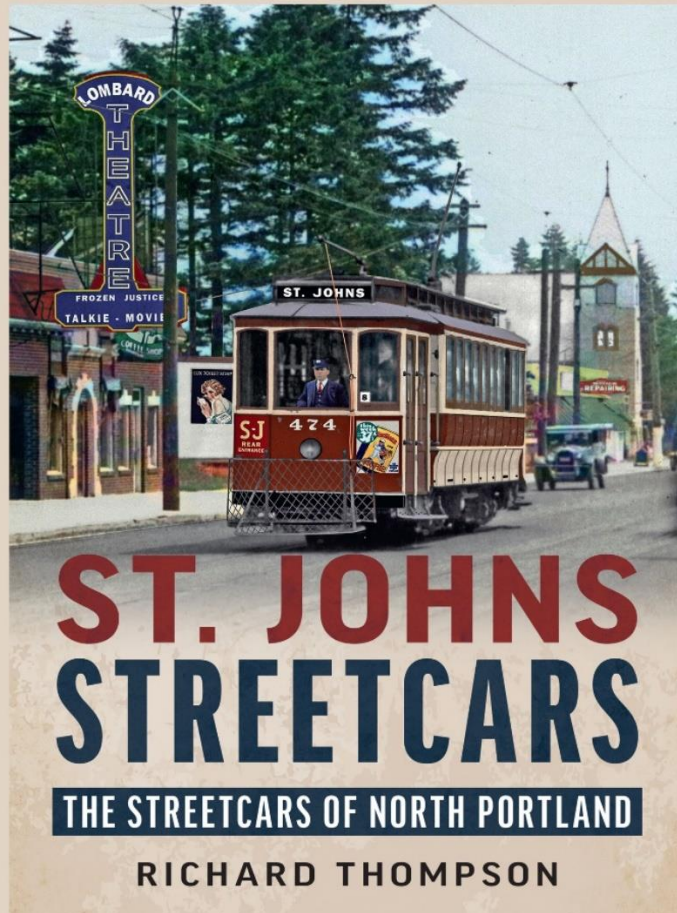
Oregon Electric Museum T-shirts featuring two favorite cars from the OERHS collection, Council Crest car 503 and Blackpool double-decker No. 48 are available in all sizes. (Betty Ballentine photograph)



Children are not forgotten at the Hopmere gift shop, which stocks a variety of kids' T-shirts, hats, coloring kits, bags, and toys. (Betty Ballentine photograph)

There is an author in our midst. Longtime Oregon Electric Railway Historical Society member, board member, and publisher of *The Transfer*, Richard “Dick” Thompson, has authored eight historical books about our beloved trolleys. His latest work is “St. Johns Streetcars: The Streetcars of North Portland.” Dick’s books are always available at our Hopmere Station and Willamette Shore Trolley locations. Dick has agreed to a SPECIAL SIGNING during Steam-Up.

SPECIAL BOOK SIGNING AT STEAM UP, JULY 30TH, 2022 ONLY!



**HOPMERE STATION LOBBY
FIRST SATURDAY OF STEAM UP!**

Clearing Brush Along the Line

Gene Fabryka

There are many more tasks to perform at the Oregon Electric Museum than streetcar operation and restoration. This summer Evan Burroughs and Gene Fabryka have worked on cutting back trees and brush along the west property line at Powerland Heritage Park. This will keep branches from hitting trolleys as they travel along our track.

Evan also plans on creating an exit road between the track and west boundary so that in the future vehicles will be able to leave during Steamup without driving through the Powerland grounds. 🚗

Calling All Volunteers!

Mark Kavanagh

The OERHS needs volunteers to keep our trolleys moving, generating much-needed income to maintain and restore our trolleys and infrastructure. Unfortunately, we do not have enough crews to staff the museum for Steam-Up while simultaneously operating the Willamette Shore trolley. As a result a hard decision has been made to shut down the WST for the two weekends of Steam-Up so that WST volunteers can help at the museum.

Steam-Up requires two-man crews on the trolleys. With trolleys running every 25~30 minutes at peak with quick turnarounds, we need 5~6 volunteers to operate trolleys while allowing for breaks, helping punch tickets, dispatching the trolleys, and helping in the depot. We also need at least two people in the gift shop to help sell tickets and gift shop items. IF we have more volunteers, we can also open the carbarn for tours, which is an excellent opportunity to solicit donations.



Evan Burroughs and Gene Fabryka used the MP 60 boom lift to access trees for cutting back from the trolley line at Powerland Heritage Park. (Gene Fabryka photograph).

The two Steam-Up weekends are our highest revenue events of the year. The dates are July 30/31 and August 6/7. Crews start at 9 am, and we end service by 5 pm each day. We will also need help prepping the museum for Steam-Up, including cleaning up the depot, carbarn, and around the grounds. Crews are at the museum each weekend leading up to Steam up. If you would like to volunteer, please contact Mark Kavanagh at oerhs503@gmail.com.

As noted above, WST is running lean crews. More motorman/conductors are needed every Saturday and Sunday through Labor Day. If you are interested, don't hesitate to get in touch with Jan Zweerts at jmzweerts@gmail.com.

Lastly, the Halloween Event will run on weekends in October. Details will follow, but we know we will need help decorating the grounds, the carbarn, and the depot. Even more so, we will need volunteers to run the event. Volunteers include actor guides, motormen, ticket sales/station agents, pumpkin, and parking monitors, and more. If you are interested, please contact Joe Tracy at joetracy@earthlink.net. To get an idea about Powerland Halloween, refer to <https://powerlandhalloween.com/>. The theme is different this year, but this will give you an idea of what we do.

Speaking of volunteers, we have received a Thank-You from the late Bill Binns' Family. Bill's wife,

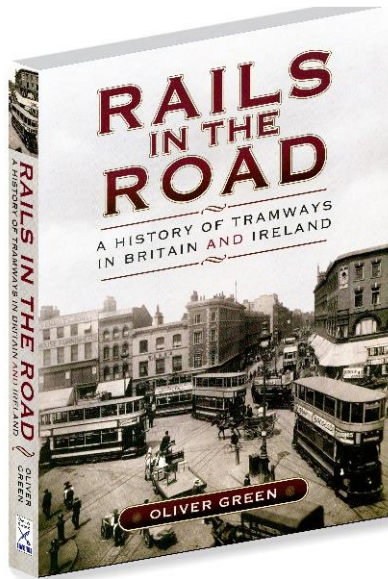
Elouise, and his sister, Marge, expressed their appreciation for the beautiful celebration of life the OERHS held in Bill's honor.

The service was well attended, both in-person and via Zoom. Stories were shared, and tears shed, but there were also smiles and laughter. Just as Bill would have wanted. He will be missed by all, but also remembered.

If you missed the service, it was recorded and posted to YouTube as "Bill Binns Celebration of Life."

The Board has declared the library at Hopmere Station the **William H. Binns, Jr. Memorial Library**. Elouise graciously donated Bill's traction book collection to the museum. It comprised seventeen crates of books, one of videos and two with photos. Mark Kavanagh is slowly going through and cataloging them. 📖





Book Review: Rails in the Road

Richard Thompson

Oliver Green. Barnsley, U.K., Pen & Sword Books Ltd., 2016. 269 pp. 403 images. \$49.95. Hardcover.

During the Covid pandemic I had plenty of time to catch up on traction history. One book I had previously missed reading was *Rails in the Road: A History of Tramways in Britain and Ireland*.

This comprehensive, profusely illustrated, history of British streetcars stands out from the other half-dozen volumes in my collection concerning street railways in the U.K. Author Oliver Green, a former Head Curator at the London Transport Museum (which I had the good fortune to visit a few years ago), covers the subject more thoroughly and he has selected more than 400 images with which to illustrate his subject. Many of those wonderful images are in color. They have been carefully selected from the LTM, the author's personal archive, and elsewhere. Unlike the pictures seen in most transit histories, these include postcards, tickets, passes, and advertisements.

Another thing that sets this book apart is its coverage of social as well as technical history. Some readers might miss the lack of car specifications, rosters, etc. but I found it to be a pleasant change. A good deal of attention is given to the political environment surrounding the municipal corporations that operated most tramways in Britain and Ireland. That is a topic that will likely be unfamiliar to readers in the U.S., where most early streetcar systems were built by private enterprise.

Chapters move from horsecars, to steam and cable, and then electrics. The influence of both world wars is

given prominent attention in a separate chapter. The book concludes with coverage of tram museums and the renaissance now called light rail.

Rails in the Road is highly recommended. It should be of particular interest to members of the Oregon Electric Railway Historical Society, since our collection is international in scope and Blackpool "double decker" No. 48 is a popular favorite. 🚋



Wartime London County Council tramways staff pose at Camberwell depot (we would call it a car barn) in south London c. 1916. Women conductors became a familiar sight during WW I.

DONATION REQUEST (Tax deductible receipt will be mailed to you)

Remember the OERHS in your Will or Trust. Even a small bequest can help the museum grow!

Did You Know?

Members 70.5 years and older can make tax free donations to the OERHS from their 401(k) that count towards the mandatory percentage 2.5% that they need to take out of their IRA anyway. Consider making a donation today!

Donation Opportunities

Endowment Fund	<u>Items</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Amount</u>
	Endowment Fund	<i>Helps create an endowment fund to support operations, staff (future) and general projects</i>	\$ _____
Board Fund	Unrestricted Funds	<i>Allows Board to allocate funds as needed (Projects, events, car acquisition, etc.)</i>	\$ _____
Capital Projects	Phase 1 Yard Project	<i>Build a permanent switch yard (~11k)</i>	\$ _____
	Carbarn #2	<i>Build the 2nd carbarn (will also be the temporary restoration shop) – (~\$450k)</i>	\$ _____
	Mainline Loop	<i>Complete the loop for multiple car operation and operate single-ended cars. Adding ~ 2000 additional feet will complete the loop. (~\$45k)</i>	\$ _____
	Interpretive Center	<i>Flooring, archives, displays, and exterior landscaping (sidewalks, platforms, etc.)</i>	\$ _____
	Buy A Tie	<i>\$55 buys us a new fir tie to replace worn out ones (we need about 2000 of them so every single tie is a great help)</i>	\$ _____
Restoration Projects	Buy Concrete	<i>~\$120/yd³ for track, curbs, platforms, etc.</i>	\$ _____
	PRL&P #1067	<i>Help refurbish the running gear we obtained the NWRM to restore this car</i>	\$ _____
	Car Restoration	<i>All our cars need love & care and many are awaiting restoration. Donate to the car fund or specify a car. Some of the projects underway are: 813 (Broadway car), 1159 (PCC), 1455 (snowsweeper) & locos 254 & 401</i>	\$ _____ Car: _____
Specific Items: <i>(Donate items or \$)</i>	Uniform Parts	<i>Hats, pants, vests & jackets for volunteers</i>	\$ _____
Name Your Project		<i>Do you have an idea you would like to see done? Tell us about it!</i>	\$ _____
TOTAL			\$ _____

To: OERHS, 3995 Brooklake Rd, Brooks, Oregon 97303

Name _____ Date _____ Cash \$ _____ Check \$ _____

Credit Card: \$ _____ Visa MasterCard American Express Discover

Card # _____ Sec Code _____ Expires _____ Signature _____

THANK YOU!