Austin's Streetcar Era

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ON JANUARY 6, 1875, after four years of planning, the Austin City Railroad Company dispatched the first mule-drawn streetcar on an inspection tour of its newly completed transportation system. The moving spirit of the enterprise had been Colonel John M. Swisher, soldier, banker, and early Texas settler, who came to Austin in January, 1868, to organize the undertaking. Uncertainty characterized the initial development of the company; meetings of the organizers were irregular, interspersed with extended periods of inactivity. At one meeting, which epitomized the venture, the capital stock was set at $50,000, with the authority to increase it to $500,000. Finally, however, on September 7, 1874, the city council granted a franchise authorizing the company to build and maintain a horse or mule railroad, with permission to use any streets within the city, and work on the project was begun.

The beginning of transportation service in 1875 took place under even more inauspicious circumstances than those that had marked the period of organization. At the corner of Eleventh Street and Congress Avenue, just south of the entrance to the Capitol, misfortune overtook the inaugural tour of inspection. As the mule hitched to the small streetcar jogged around the corner, the car left the tracks and turned over. No one sustained injuries but the dignity of several company officials who had been passengers was badly bruised. Eight days after the accident, on January 14, a second inspection was made of the road to decide whether to accept it from the contractor. Before the streetcar completed its circuit the experience of the initial tour was repeated four times, and each time the derailment occurred on a curve. Complaints were made and the difficulties quickly remedied.

The first paying passengers were hauled on January 15, 1875. The returns were small as measured by the standards of today. It must be recalled, however, that the population of Austin then was only 7,500, and that the operating costs also were small.

A local newspaper, early in 1875, contained this news:

The receipts of the Austin City Railroad on Saturday and Sunday amounted to $116—$43 on Saturday and $73 on Sunday. We understand that $20 a day pays all the incidental expenses of the road, so the flattering receipts of the first two business days of the road indicate that the enterprise will prove a paying investment. . . . We look upon the Austin street railway as a great stimulator to the growth and prosperity of this city.[1]

At the end of a ten-day period, the paper jubilantly related that the earnings had averaged about $50 a day—far exceeding expectations. "The road has been built in spite of a positive and formidable opposition, and it is especially pleasing that the enterprise is so flattering at the beginning."[2]

An average of $50 a day was difficult to maintain and necessitated unusual catering to the riding public. Officials leaned backward in an attempt to please. Drivers of the little cars were required to look right and left at every crossing and to stop at any point where a passenger wished to board or alight. The speed necessarily was slow, but the situation was improved by trotting the mules wherever conditions permitted. A maximum load of a dozen passengers soon tired the animals, and fresh animals were used after each trip.

Out of traditional deference and courtesy, male passengers were not permitted to smoke if there was a woman in the car. If men were smoking when a woman entered, the courtesy of the times required them to discontinue. Rarely did the driver have to ask a man to stop smoking.

The mule-drawn streetcar service from 1875 through 1890 was reasonably satisfactory. The riders had never known a better system; it was on a par with other means of local transportation.

The driver was the chief salesman for the company. Though blustery, he was cheerful, called people by their names, and was well liked. He was poorly protected from the weather, but he never complained. His hours were crowded with activity: looking out for more passengers, seeing that those who boarded paid their fare, keeping horses and other vehicles off the tracks, and seeing that the tails of the mules did not get over the lines.

In the early part of 1878 the ownership of the streetcar system

[1]Austin *Daily Democratic Statesman,* January 19, 1875.
[2]*Ibid.,* January 26, 1875.

passed into the hands of Dr. J. J. Tobin, a physician and business man. Prior to the streetcar venture, he owned a bathhouse in Hot Springs, Arkansas, before the United States government took charge of the resort. In addition to his medical practice in Austin, he owned a wholesale and retail drugstore, the streetcar system, and other enterprises.

Tobin improved the streetcar service and had the goodwill of the public, but there were discouragements. When the Capitol burned on November 9, 1881, for example, the transit business was hurt. After about six years Tobin sold the company to his brother, Dr. William H. Tobin, who also was interested in many activities, including a real estate firm, to which the streetcar proved an asset.

There is a bit of human interest connected with the fare system of the mule line. The cash fare was a nickel, but a slight reduction was made for the bulk purchase of tokens. A brown vulcanite or hard rubber token was sold at ten for forty-five cents. So widespread was the use of the tokens that practically every store in town accepted them as cash in payment for purchases. The customers, in turn, willingly accepted them as change.

Wallace Tobin, son of Dr. J. J. Tobin, relates an instance when the tokens were not accepted. As a small boy he took a handful of tokens to a circus, expecting to use them as cash. To his disappointment, the out-of-town circus declined to accept them.[3]

These tokens, long since obsolete, have become rare, and demand a premium from transportation token collectors, selling for two dollars each.

Austin celebrated a gala day on May 16, 1888, when the new capitol was dedicated. Many persons thronged the streets, and the little mule cars did a splendid business.

On March 25, 1889, Dr. William H. Tobin sold the mule car system to a group of capitalists from Boston and Chicago for $120,000 in cash. The plans were to convert to electricity, extend the line, and buy new cars. The improvements were to cost an additional $200,000. The improvements were delayed, however, and the mule cars continued in operation for two more years.

The first electric streetcars in Austin resulted from the tireless

[3]Wallace Tobin to A. T. J., personal interview, April 1, 1952.

efforts of M. M. Shipe and his associates. In the late 1880's, Shipe, a native of Ohio, came from Abilene, Kansas, where he had unsatisfactory experiences with a mule-car system. Hence his determination to build an electric line. He secured a charter in 1890, built five miles of track and purchased cars.

Shipe's story reveals dogged persistence:

> I built the electric street railway line in Austin ... equipped it, and erected a powerhouse, etc., at a total outlay of $62,500—without a cent of capital. I built it against the most strenuous opposition of rival interests. ... Eventually a peace was arranged, which later was confirmed by the union of the two interests. ... I had $830 when I came to Austin. This I spent in securing my franchise, to enable me to build a road to the tract of land I had secured north of the city, and which I proposed to open up.
>
> My franchise at first permitted me to occupy only those streets ... not already occupied by some other track. But my rivals went about laying small stretches of track on so many streets—just to keep my line off of them—that I prevailed upon the council to amend the franchise and permit me to lay a track on Congress Avenue and 6th Street as well. ... I did it on borrowed capital, completed it and ran the first car just one hour 44 minutes before the time limit of 10 months allowed me expired.[4]

At 4:00 P.M., on February 26, 1891, Shipe's Austin Rapid Transit Railway Company put its new electric cars on Congress Avenue. That and the following day were gala times. The cars were crowded all day and late into the night; about 2,000 persons rode the cars the first day.

While Austin papers played up this news, it was given scant attention in other cities. The Dallas *Morning News,* for example, carried this brief notice:

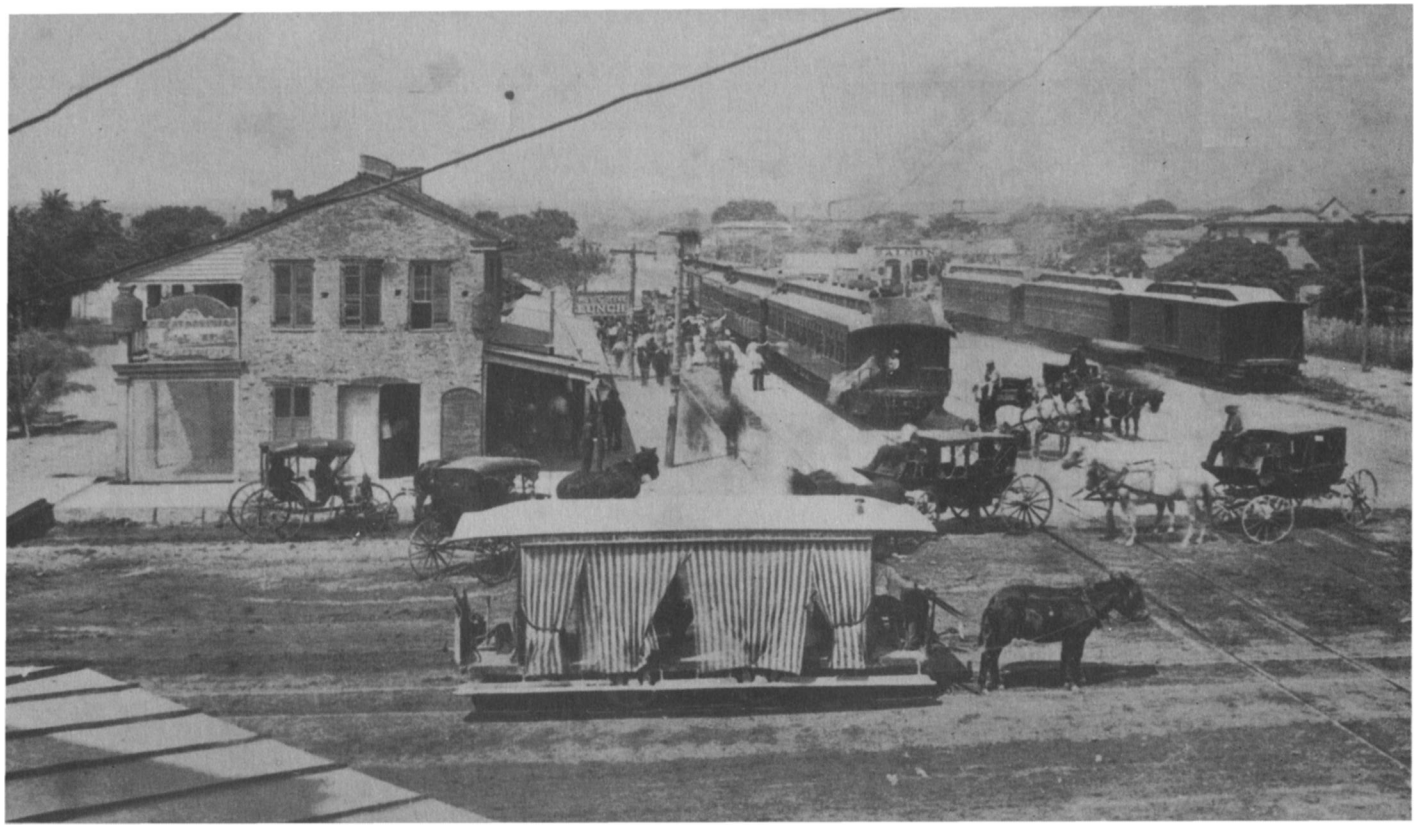
> Austin, Tex., Feb. 26.—The electric car company made up a train of cars and trailers on the Avenue and carried hundreds out to Hyde Park this evening. It gave the town a very city-like appearance. Cars on this line will make regular trips hereafter.[5]

The builder of the electric line enjoyed good business hauling people to see the new real estate venture in Hyde Park and taking passengers to attend band concerts.[6] All the riding, however, was

[4]Frank Brown, Annals of Travis County and City of Austin (MS., Archives, University of Texas Library).

[5]Dallas *Morning News,* February 27, 1891.

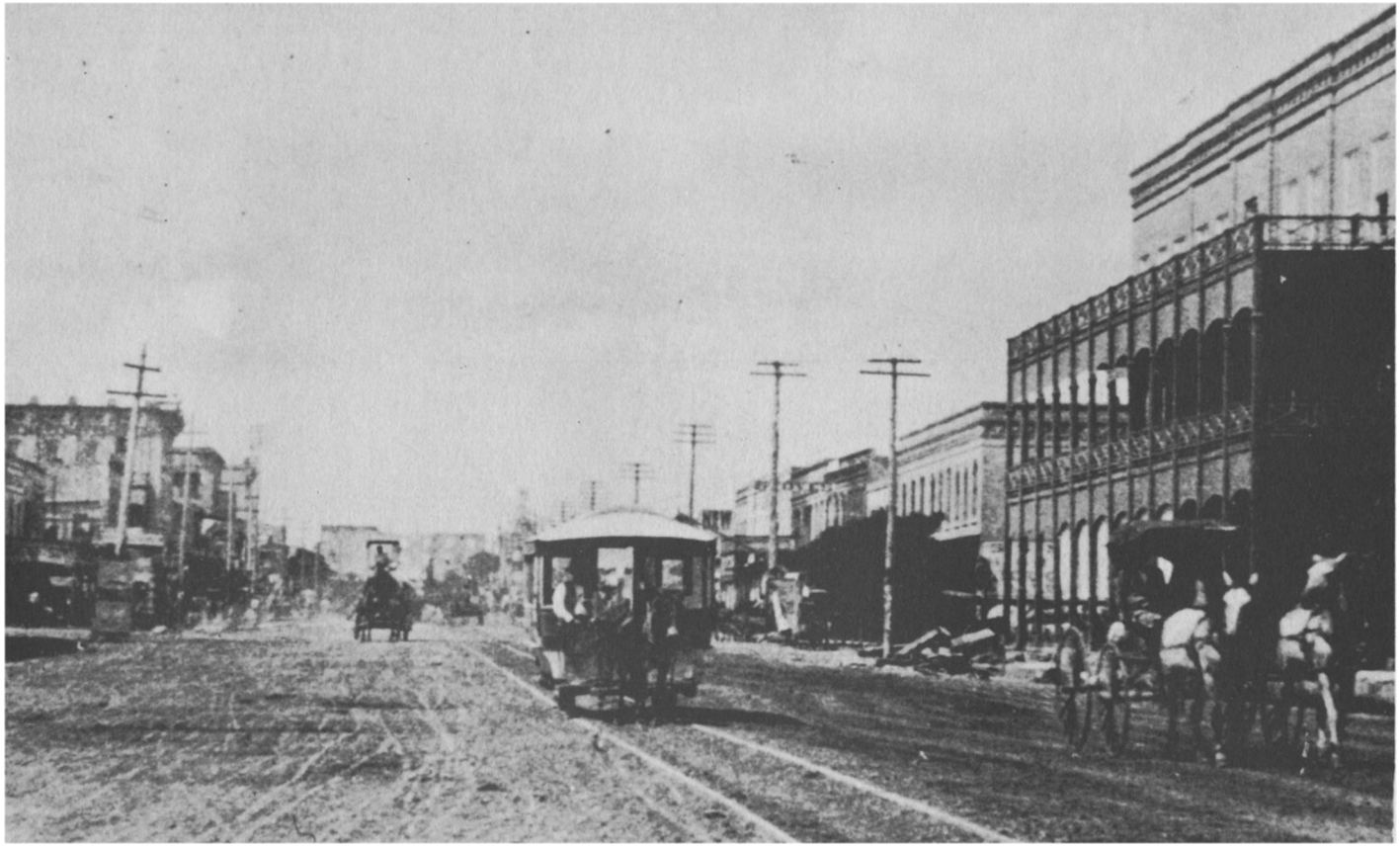
[6]Mrs. Peter Mansbendel to A. T. J., personal interview, April 21, 1952.



(Photograph courtesy Archives Department, Texas State Library)

MULE-DRAWN STREETCAR OF 1876

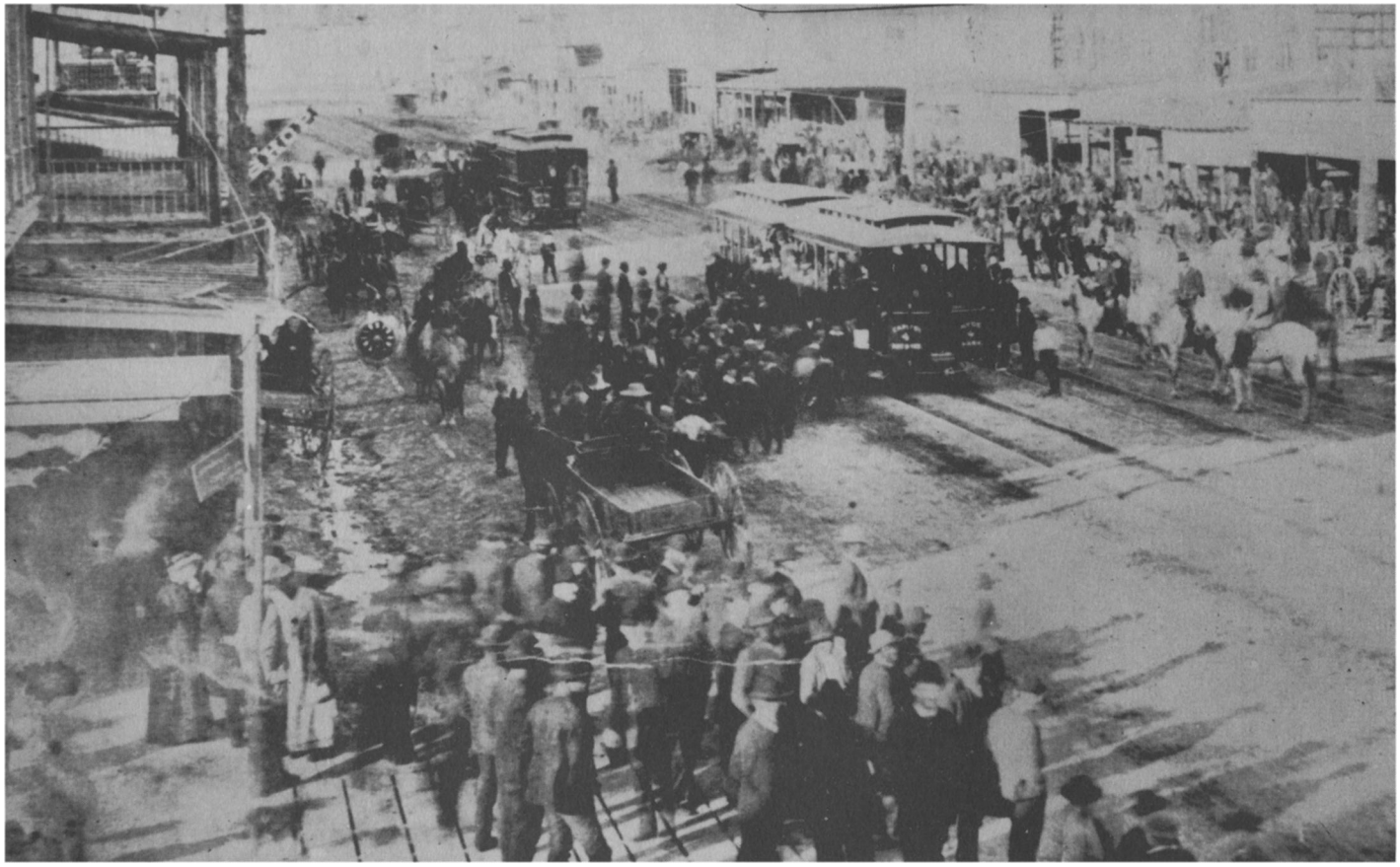
This was the first public transportation system in the capital of Texas. The curtains were intended to keep out the rain and cold wind. The wood-burning trains also were newcomers. A private home was converted into this I. & G. N. depot.



(Photograph courtesy Frank Albrecht)

ONE-MULE CAR OF 1881

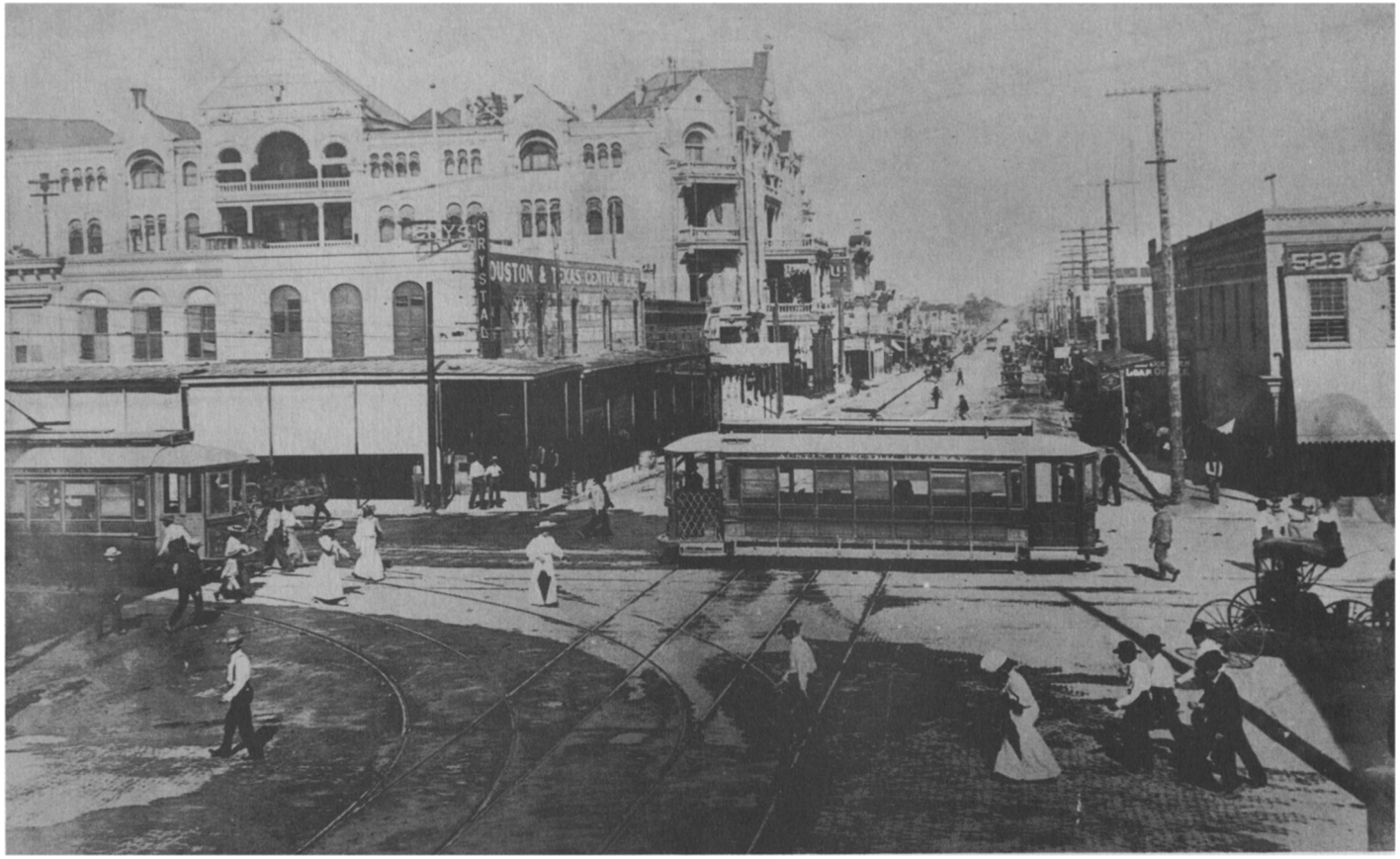
This scene, at 5th Street and Congress Avenue, shows how small the mule was compared with the team pulling the nearby buggy. Note the unpaved avenue.



(Photograph courtesy Mrs. Peter Mansbendel)

CELEBRATING FIRST ELECTRIC CARS

The first day the electric cars were operated—February 26, 1891—large crowds packed on them. Trailers were attached to the cars. The tracks to the right were those of the mule-car line. As the rival cars passed, elbows of some standing passengers struck each other.



(Photograph from Ellison Photo Co.)

ELECTRIC CARS OF 1906

Street scene at intersection of Congress Avenue and 6th Street. The pedestrians give an inkling of the styles of that time.

not on the electric cars; part of the crowd overflowed into the mule cars. The cars were so crowded that many passengers stood on the lengthy step running alongside. The space between the tracks of the rival companies was narrow, and as one electric car sped by another, a score of elbows were skinned, but no one was seriously injured. The electric cars stopped only on the far side at street crossings. Prospective riders, having fresh in mind the special service furnished by the mule cars, did not approve of the strict rules enforced by the Rapid Transit Company.

"In the early days of the electric cars," an old motorman recalls, "only a small carbon globe was used for a headlight. The motorman could not see ten feet in front. We would be bowling along over the rough track and see a man waiting. By the time the car was stopped, he would have half a block to run. Everybody just laughed."[7]

On the evening of April 20, 1891, a deluge of rain drenched concert goers who had ridden the electric cars to Hyde Park. The current went off, the tracks were badly washed and covered with dirt. Several cars jumped the track. The Rapid Transit Company sent out horse-drawn carriages after the stranded women and children. Hackmen took advantage of the situation and charged six dollars to haul four persons or less. It was two days before the electric cars were able to run. The mule cars lost only a few hours.

In the early hours of May 9, 1891, the uptown car stable was destroyed by fire. The volunteer fire department was unable to cope with the huge blaze. More than thirty mules lost their lives, and sixteen cars burned. Only three cars were recovered.[8]

Mrs. John W. Bracken, then a child, recalls details of the fire, which was near her home. She thinks a lantern, left in a stall, was kicked over by a mule.

> It was like a circus crowd around the burning barn. Thousands of people watched. Some of the animals were saved. Others, crazed by fright, ran back into the fire and perished. The neighing of the burning animals was blood-curdling. Under direction of the city health department, the bodies were completely burned.[9]

Within five hours after the blaze ended, Charles Hicks, manager

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[7]Austin *Statesman,* March 22, 1918.
[8]Austin *Daily Statesman,* May 9, 1891.
[9]Mrs. John W. Bracken to A. T. J., personal interview, March 15, 1952.

of the system, had the Congress Avenue line in operation on a curtailed basis.

Two weeks after the fire, the stockholders of both streetcar companies met in Austin. The Austin City Railroad Company was represented by J. O. Weatherbee of Boston, F. H. Watriss of New York, and C. E. Judson of Chicago. The Austin Rapid Transit Railway Company was represented by W. B. Clark of Kansas City and John K. Urie of Austin. The local managers, Charles Hicks and M. M. Shipe, also took part in the meeting.

The two interests were merged and plans made to put in, within three months, a $300,000 electric car line. Difficulties were cleared away. The city council, which lifted the restrictions against selling stock in the electric line to the old mule line, removed the injunction against consolidating the two roads and authorized the placing of double tracks on Congress Avenue, provided the tracks of the mule car line were taken up. Further requirements included the construction of four more miles of track, to be added within fifteen months, and the purchase of twelve new electric cars.

Extensions commenced late in September, at which time the mules and little cars were taken off the old line which ran from the North Austin car barns south to the depot. On October 25, 1891, the last mule cars ran on Sixth Street, thus ending a colorful system of city transportation, and by December 4, 1891, the revamped streetcar line was completed and in full operation.

For some time there were many complaints ranging from the alleged "haughty indifference" of the company employees to excessive and needless clanging of the streetcar bells. The most common complaint was of the frightening of horses. One frightened horse ran into a stone bridge, upset a buggy, threw the occupant out, and caused a serious spinal injury.

M. M. Shipe, founder of the electric system, resigned two days before Christmas, 1891—just nineteen days after the consolidation of the two lines and the making of extensions were completed. He stepped out to devote full time to the real estate business.[10] John K. Urie succeeded him as manager of the line.

For four years the upkeep of the streetcar system was neglected. On April 30, 1896, a newspaper item telling of the laying of new

[10]Austin *Daily Statesman*, December 24, 1891.

ties and rails added: "The road has run down considerably in the past few years and the new manager, Frank E. Scoville, is now hard at work fixing it up. As soon as the needed repairs are made a better schedule will be put in operation."[11]

A few repairs did not solve all the problems. The company was losing money. In addition to this, in the spring of 1899, there was a powerhouse breakdown. Scoville tried to get more city power, but he was turned down. The situation grew worse, and it culminated in a streetcar tie-up. Gloom settled over the Austin streetcars, but on October 10, 1899, a local newspaper reported that:

> Major Ira H. Evans, receiver for the Austin Rapid Transit Ry. Co., has returned from the north. He at once took steps looking to the operation of the streetcar lines. . . . The entire matter of purchasing a new steam plant to operate the road has to be referred to the federal court, because the road is in the hands of a federal receiver.[12]

The streetcars finally resumed operation.

The first great Austin dam was completed on May 2, 1893, and as a result the city soon was able to furnish power to operate the streetcars. The dam broke, however, on April 7, 1900, after having been in use just seven years. The date was indelibly stamped on the minds of Austin citizens; the disaster came with a suddenness that left the public aghast. Cloudbursts on tributary streams of the Colorado caused the river to rise rapidly. The dam gave way, and a lake thirty miles long and a mile wide soon was no more.

The powerhouse, which furnished lights for the city and power for the streetcar company, was a mass of ruins. Eight city employees were trapped in the building and drowned. The city streets were left without lights, and the famous tower lights were dark for nine months. Candles and kerosene lamps were used in the business houses. The water problem was a grave one.

The electric streetcars could not run, and temporarily there was a complete interruption of transit service. A decision was made to return to the use of mule-drawn cars until the streetcar company could build its own powerhouse. This required about nine months.

After the dam broke, many motormen and conductors were out of work. Some of these men who had been on the police force

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[11] *Ibid.*, April 30, 1896.

[12] *Ibid.*, October 10, 1899.

patrolled the unlighted residential sections, and others helped build the steam plant for the streetcar company. On its completion they were called back to operate the electric cars. George Milton, Sr., who spent nearly fifty years in the employ of the transit system in Austin, knew about those troublous times.[13] After the dam disaster, he drove a mule-drawn open trailer with no curtains.

The loaded trailers were heavy, and three mules were required to pull peak loads. For lighter loads, in slack periods, two mules were used. The animals were changed each round trip. On reaching the end of the line, it was necessary to unhitch the mules and move them to the opposite end of the car. The usual way was for a passenger to drive the mules around, while the driver transferred the doubletrees, singletrees, and drawhead pin.

When asked if the drivers used whips, Milton replied:

> Oh, yes. We were not supposed to use it, but some of the mules were lazy and had to feel the whip occasionally. Each driver made his own whip, and used it when necessary. But we had to be on the lookout for the ladies of the Humane Society. We soon learned who they were; and when one of them was seen coming we hastily crammed the whip under the seat.
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> Most of the fares [Milton declared] were from the University of Texas students. They helped the driver collect fares; and would not allow the car to come to a full stop. They lined up on both sides of an approaching car. When the mules were brought to a walk, everyone climbed aboard. Of course, the boys got a little gay sometimes and crowded the rear end, jumping up and down until the car left the rails. But they always pushed it on again.
>
> One evening the fire truck came down the street behind me. The mules got scared, took off toward the University, and pulled the car part way up the steps of a building.[14]

In late September, 1900, the company powerhouse was producing available power for running cars. Full service was impossible, however, until a few months later when the dynamos were installed.

The Rapid Transit Railway Company started its first operations with praise, popularity, and prosperity, but during most of the time from 1892 to 1902 the streetcars operated at a loss. After eleven years of difficulties, dissatisfaction, and deficits the company passed into history.

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[13]George Milton, Sr., to A. T. J., letter, March 22, 1952.

[14]*Ibid.*, personal interview, April 5, 1952.

On May 6, 1902, the company was sold at public auction by the receiver. The minimum price to be considered was $100,000. Only one bid was received. It was from F. H. Watriss of New York, president of the defunct company who bought it back for 20 per cent of its total indebtedness.

A new company, the Austin Electric Railway Company, was chartered on May 29, 1902, with a capital stock of $200,000. Two days later the old company was officially absorbed by the new one. It was another financial transfusion.

Frank E. Scoville continued as manager of the new company, but remained at the helm less than three years. He then was succeeded by Wilbur H. Young, who held the job only fourteen months. Young was followed by William J. Jones, who came to Texas to accept the position.

The new company soon launched improvements and extensions. Included among the improvements were eight combination streetcars. The open-air cars, which had side curtains that rolled up into the top in the same manner as a roll-top desk, could be easily converted from open to closed type.

While extensions were being made, an electrician became involved with tangled electric wires. A live wire, entangled with the trolley wires, hung to the ground between the tracks. Two cars, crowded with passengers, waited for the removal of the wire. The electrician, driving his one-horse wagon between the cars, attempted to rope the wire. Touching a metal wagon tire, the wire gave out a bright flame, accompanied by a roaring sound. The horse lunged and passengers screamed. The man was thrown to the ground near the burning wire, but fortunately the wire was too short to reach the man on the ground. A motorman from one of the cars grabbed the fallen man by the coat and jerked him out of danger.

All agreed that streetcar motormen should have better protection from inclement weather than the open cars afforded. Accordingly a state vestibule law was passed and became effective on November 15, 1904, which required that vestibules be used on cars from November to March. An exception was made in case of excursionists visiting a city. Where such visits created an emergency, unvestibuled or summer cars might be used.

On January 2, 1905, a bombshell exploded beneath the feet of

the local streetcar officials. Plans were being made to pave Congress Avenue. The paving committee submitted a resolution to the city council, instructing the city attorney to bring suit for the forfeiture of the Austin Electric Railway Company's franchise. This was to be done unless within five days the company let a contract for the paving of its right-of-way. The resolution was adopted but in court a franchise cannot be declared forfeited with only five days notice. The company got a hearing and within three days the city council rescinded its hasty action. The council was assured the company would do its share in the paving program, but bonds would have to be sold. A member of the city council admitted that the move to forfeit the franchise was aimed at the out-of-town owners. It was intended to "wake them up" to the fact that Austin meant business.

For a few years the streetcar company made a little money. In 1908, for example, the net earnings, after taxes, were over $20,000. But on January 3, 1911, the Austin Electric Railway Company was sold to twenty-eight stockholders of New England. The charter of the new company—the Austin Street Railway Company—called for $1,250,000 capital stock. An expansion program was launched. There were to be a larger and better power plant, new cars, and improved tracks. This time the financial transfusion came before the patient was deadly ill.

From April 3, 1911, to March 31, 1915, the records show dividends were paid to the stockholders each year. The first dividend was more than $61,000; the next two, $37,000 each; the last, only $9,000. Income was dwindling and no further dividends could be paid.

Efforts were made to encourage streetcar riding. Illustrations of this are found in advertisements used during the transition period from horse-drawn to horseless carriages.

It is not practical or economical to keep a horse and carriage simply to 'go to town' and back. And walking is too fatiguing. The streetcar solves every problem of getting anywhere.[15]

No Tire Troubles when you take your evening out on a streetcar. Ride and laugh at the hot weather![16]

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[15]Austin *Daily Statesman,* December 6, 1914.

[16]Austin *American,* July 12, 1914.

Pranks and so-called practical jokes were worse on special occasions, such as Halloween and Christmas. Such an incident occurred just south of the capitol. A delivery wagon was dismantled and placed across the track. Crowds of boys prevented the removal of the wreckage; when it was taken off, they replaced it. Rock setters sometimes had a field day, after covering a section of track with small stones. This caused a bumpy ride that irritated passengers. Dynamite caps, placed on the rails the night before Christmas, resulted in the injury of a motorman. The brakes were jarred loose and caused an accident.

Another annoying, and sometimes serious, bit of deviltry was the greasing or soaping of the rails—particularly around curves—which caused the cars to slide. In one instance a car jumped the track, broke two telephone poles, and plowed into a well-kept lawn. In another instance a car ran 150 feet and landed in a ditch.

More destructive acts sometimes were perpetrated. On one occasion a group of boys threw stones, breaking several windows and injuring a passenger. Again a large firecracker and a rocket were thrown into a car, and a passenger was burned on the back of the neck.

In an attempt to decrease accidents, much newspaper advertising was done. The fact that streetcars could not dodge was stressed. One advertisement read:

SAFETY FIRST

Do not read or get wrapped up in conversation,
or thought, while crossing a busy street.
Keep your eyes on your sides and back—
your front is seldom injured.[17]

A heart-rending case occurred late in 1911. A two-year-old girl, playing in the street with a nurse, was run over by a streetcar in front of her home. The nurse ran toward the near-by sidewalk, but the child ran toward the oncoming streetcar. On striking the side of the car she was thrown under the wheels; her right leg was almost severed and the left foot crushed. There had been no time to avert the accident, although the car was stopped in eight feet. The child was rushed to the hospital, where the right leg was

[17] *Ibid.*, August 16, 1914.

amputated. The motorman was so shocked he spent the remainder of the day in bed.

Streetcar workers long will remember the "jitney war." In the spring of 1915 jitneys were carrying about 3,000 passengers a day. The jitneys followed the streetcar lines, picking up passengers waiting for the electric cars. Topless old jalopies even permitted passengers to stand on the running boards. Poor though their service was, it cut deeply into the revenue of the streetcar system.

A city ordinance finally required jitney operators to furnish bond for $5,000 as protection to the city and the public in case of accident. The jitneys could not afford to operate under the streetcar fares and were forced off the streets.

In January, 1917, to offset rising costs of material and wages, four one-man safety cars were ordered. It was seven months before they arrived. One man operated the motor and collected fares. At first there was considerable opposition to the one-man safety cars.

In 1907 conductors and motormen were receiving only fourteen cents per hour. What enabled workers to exist was the fact that prices, too, were low. Eggs, for example, sold for five cents per dozen. A raise of two cents an hour was granted to employees in January, 1917, raising the maximum pay to twenty-five cents per hour. There were two increases in 1919 and two in 1920. Still in December, 1925, the highest rate was only forty-five cents an hour. The depression year of 1931 witnessed a 10 per cent pay cut, with another reduction in 1932. Recovery was slow, but by 1937 the hourly rate was up to forty-one cents. By 1940 it had advanced to fifty-four and one-half cents.

What was the financial condition of the company? In 1918 it made a return of only 3 per cent. Automobiles were beginning to hurt streetcar revenue. In 1919 the company operated at a loss of about $1,300 per month. The year 1920 was worse, and in 1921 the company went into federal receivership. There followed other years of financial difficulties. Then the depression struck. The year 1932—even after making a wage cut—resulted in a net operating loss of $62,500. The years 1933 through 1935 showed smaller losses. From 1936 to 1939 conditions gradually improved, reflecting net gains of $4,000 to $25,000 per year. During this period workers received wage raises.

For forty-five years—January 15, 1875, to June 1, 1920—the adult fare was five cents. The public seemed to think the fare always should remain a nickel. It took more than a year to convince the city and the public that the first fare increase was sorely needed. On May 10, 1920, the Austin *Statesman* took a straw vote. Of 627 votes cast, 347 were favorable and 280 opposed to the increase. This sample indicated that 55 per cent of the citizens were ready to go along with the streetcar company.[18]

The new fares were:	Adults	—Cash	.07
		Tokens	.06¼
	Children—		.03

On July 5, 1929, adult fares were raised to ten cents cash and seven and one-half cents tokens. Ten years later—October 12, 1939—a new franchise permitted the adult cash fare to remain at ten cents, but the full-fare tokens were reduced to six cents each. School children could buy half-fare tokens at four cents. This was the last fare adjustment of the streetcar company.

On July 1, 1922, J. F. Springfield, an engineer and successful business man, succeeded W. J. Jones as manager of the company. He took over a run-down system and gradually put it on its feet. But there were struggles. Sometimes he was unable to meet the payroll and was forced to pay small installments as receipts came in. A long-time employee recently remarked:

> Mr. Springfield always knew what was going on. One night it rained a flood. I was off the track and 'phoned in about 10:00. He answered. After I reported, he replied: "Take it easy, don't get excited. You are the thirteenth one to telephone that you are off the track."[19]

From 1925 to 1933 the company had twenty-three miles of track. During that time experiments with buses were started. By 1939 there remained in service only seventeen miles of streetcar tracks; bus routes had increased to twenty-nine miles.

On February 7, 1940, a celebration marked the passing of the electric streetcars and the starting of new buses on the Main Line:

> The trolleys of the Main Line traveled their last mile to the car barns, after carrying more than 500 persons on a sentimental journey from one end of Austin to the other. Favorable weather and the tug

[18]Austin *Statesman*, May 10, 1920.

[19]M. E. Watson to A. T. J., personal interview, April 22, 1952.

of memories drew a crowd to 6th Street and Congress Avenue, . . . to mark the passing of the big yellow streetcars and the coming of the new buses that have now taken their places.

Traffic was halted for nearly an hour as the street was thronged with people before an improvised platform—while civic leaders marked the end of the Main Line cars with formal ceremony.

Mayor Tom Miller, master of ceremonies, formally opened the program stating that Austin's early expansion had largely followed the streetcar routes. . . . The Longhorn band, under the direction of Col. George E. Hurt, keynoted the occasion by the playing of Auld Lang Syne. Wallace and John Tobin, sons of the man who operated the mule-drawn cars in Austin; and Glen Shipe, son of the late M. M. Shipe, operator of the first trolley, were introduced. . . . The mayor invited many older citizens, who once rode the old mule cars, to the speakers' stand. Among those who reminisced briefly were Ed Schutze, W. G. Bell, and D. T. Lamme.

After the ceremony crowds thronged about the trolleys for the round trip from one end of the line to the other. . . . For at least an hour, both the old and the new traveled over the Main Line journey.[20]

The streetcar era in Austin had officially ended.

Early in June, 1940, most of the rails were removed by the city, but some remained in a few blocks until September, 1942.[21] At that time the last fifty thousand pounds went into the scrap heap as part of the Carload Day observance in the wartime campaign for vital metals. Many times during the local transit jams of World War II both company officials and harried bus riders longed for the old streetcars.

An aged physician had another reason for regretting their abandonment. "I hated to see the streetcars stop running," he declared, "It was so convenient for me to tell a patient to drink a glass of water every time a streetcar passed."[22]

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[20]Austin *Statesman,* February 7, 1940; Austin *American,* February 8, 1940.

[21]Austin *American,* September 29, 1942; Austin *Statesman,* September 28, 29, 1942.

[22]Dr. Robert W. Shipp to A. T. J., personal interview, March 26, 1943.