

Born in Laconia, New Hampshire on May 30, 1903, Harold H. Young became acquainted with the charms of the trolley car at an early age.

He has been actively involved with public utility finance since his graduation from Brown University in 1925 with an M.B.A. degree (Ph.B.—1923); first, as a member of Bodell & Co., investment bankers, (1925-43) and then as a partner of Eastman, Dillon & Co. in New York (1943-60).

As the author of the book, **Forty Years of Public Utility Finance**, University Press of Virginia 1965; he proves himself eminently qualified to speak on the subject of public utilities in general and the Trolley Car in particular.

A resident of Charlottesville, Virginia since 1960, Harold H. Young has still maintained strong emotional ties with Rhode Island as a Trustee of Brown University from 1964 to 1969 and as a friend of the Trolley Car.

Clang! Clang! Clang!

Went the Trolley

by Harold H. Young



"Old Home Week" September, 1908 Exchange Place, Providence.

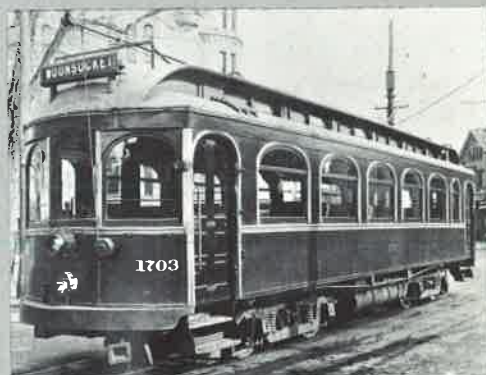
Many of the younger generation, accustomed to going anywhere, any time in an automobile, may find it hard to realize that once the trolley car was the principal means of moving about. However, plenty of older people will recall the days in which ownership of an automobile was unusual and the trolley car was depended upon for transportation to work, to school, for shopping and for sundry other errands. Not the least important role it played, was providing access to shore resorts and other recreation spots.

Rhode Island had its full share of trolley lines. By far the most important system was that of The Rhode Island Co., a subsidiary of the New Haven Railroad. In 1919 the Company went into receivership and was reorganized in 1921 as the United Electric Railways Co. (U.E.R.) which continued trolley operations to their end. At its height this system reached into nearly every populous center of the state except in Newport County and the Westerly area which had trolley lines of their own.

Street railway operations started with horse cars in the cities. Early trolley cars were often horse cars with electrical equipment added. These cars had only single trucks (four wheels) and hand brakes. Larger cars with double trucks (eight wheels) and air brakes were soon developed and the car lines were extended from the cities into outlying areas.

There were two types of trolley passenger cars—closed cars and open (or summer) cars. The early closed cars had two long seats, each running the length of the car and the passengers faced one another. Later seating arrangements resembled those of steam railroad cars or buses. The open cars, sometimes called “bloomers”, were more distinctive. Seats ran the width of the car, accommodating five passengers on each seat. Entrance to the seats was from running boards along the sides of the car. On heavy-riding days these cars were frequently loaded far beyond their seating capacity. People stood between the seats and on the running boards. This complicated the tasks of the conductor who had to walk along the running board to collect fares. Riding open cars produced an exhilaration that would be hard to explain to the uninitiated. Travel at 20 miles an hour on one of these bouncing swaying vehicles gave pleasure that can't be duplicated behind the windshield of an automobile doing 60.

Until the early 1920's most trolleys were oper-



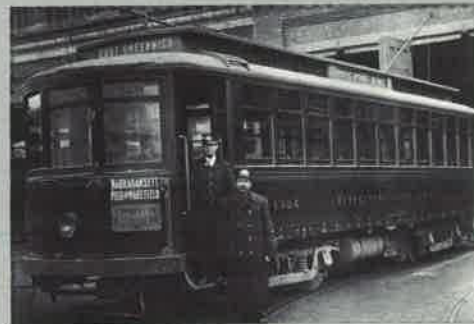
Unique Providence-Woonsocket line car similar to interurban cars of the middle west.

ated by two men, a conductor and a motorman. The conductor collected the fares, called out the streets ("Rochambeau Avenue next"), and gave the signals for starting (two bells) and stopping (one bell). The motorman gave his full attention to running the car. When evil days loomed, one-man operation was introduced. Specially constructed one-man cars were purchased and existing rolling stock was rebuilt to be handled by a single man. Automatic safety devices made these cars practical and substantial expense savings were effected; but with one man performing duties of two, something of the folksy nature of the trolley was lost. Incidentally, in 1912 platform men of The Rhode Island Co. earned 27½¢ an hour and a seven-day work week was normal.

Many main arteries of the cities had double tracks but on other streets and on most suburban and rural lines single track operation prevailed. Turnouts had to be provided for cars to meet and pass, so "waiting on a turnout" was part of the way of life for passengers on these lines. However, there was not always clear sailing on the cities' doubletrack lines. Many a frustrated motorman had to trail a horse-drawn lowgear or found a truck blocking his path. Snow complicated matters further. While snow-fighting equipment was reasonably effective, many tangles were caused by traffic using the plowed tracks in the days before the streets were generally cleared.

At its zenith, The Rhode Island Co. operated over 350 miles of line but significant attrition began in 1920 when the two longest runs were lopped off. These were the routes from Providence to Narragansett Pier and Wakefield and from Providence to Danielson, Connecticut. Both were operated under lease and in the course of the receivership these lines were sold to private parties. The Sea View Railroad Co. owned the Narragansett Pier line south of East Greenwich and this was dismantled. The new owner of the Providence and Danielson Railway discontinued everything beyond North Scituate.

When the automobile was still little more than a curiosity, many people set forth on trolley trips just for sight-seeing and the fun of riding. Until around 1919 a passenger boarding a Danielson car in Providence could have continued to Wilmington, Delaware entirely by trolley except for some ferry crossings. Leaving Providence by way of Taunton he could have gone north to Shawmut, just above



Ready for the longest run, Providence to Narragansett Pier.

Waterville, in Maine and by way of Woonsocket he could have gone as far as Greenfield, Massachusetts. Guide books were published, usually written in a style to lure the reader. Taste this sample from an 1899 sales pitch as to why a Bostonian should trolley down to Providence:

"It would be impossible to paint the attractions of Providence in less than a quarto. Whether you will be more interested in her fine residences, old and new, or the remarkable view of the great city from Prospect Terrace . . . or the superb Roger Williams Park will depend on which you visit last. . . . Roger Williams Park has grown in beauty and utility beyond anything which Betsy Williams could have dreamed . . . A chain of loveliest ponds fringed by trees cools the heated atmosphere and the gay launches make a pretty picture among the rare specimens of water fowl . . . You recognize very quickly that Rhode Island Clam-bakes are justly celebrated. Field's Point on Narragansett Bay is a favorite spot for these functions,

A grip car assists a passenger car up College Hill.



NEWPORT AND PROVIDENCE RAILWAY

PROVIDENCE to
NEWPORT via
BRISTOL & BRISTOL FERRY

Connecting at Constitution St.
BRISTOL with
N. Y. N. H., & H. R. R.
ELECTRIC TRAIN SERVICE
Between
PROVIDENCE (UNION STATION)
And
BRISTOL (CONSTITUTION STREET)

IN EFFECT SEPT. 12, 1921

Subject to Changes and Corrections without Notice.

This Time Table shows the times at which trains are expected to arrive at and depart from the stations named, but their arrival or departure at the times stated is NOT GUARANTEED, nor does the Company hold itself responsible for any delay or any consequences arising therefrom.

Telephone 182 G. M. TOWLE
NEWPORT Superintendent

PROVIDENCE \$1.00
To
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WEEKLY PASS
4 a.m. Sunday to the following Sunday
Geo. Mgr. 06863

3740
THE RHODE ISLAND COMPANY
DANIELSON DIVISION
Good for
One 50c Fare
When presented under conditions stated on cover. This Coupon must be detached by the Conductor.
Form RB 14

SEA VIEW RAILROAD CO.
ONE FARE COMPLIMENTARY
00117

THE RHODE ISLAND COMPANY
PAWTUCKET LINES.
COMPLIMENTARY TICKET.
Good for one fare in any five cent line when attached to book of same number.
Subject to conditions thereon.
1458

1528
PAWTUCKET STREET RAILWAY CO.
EMPLOYEES TICKET

UNION R. R. CO.
5
GOOD IN ANY CAR

THE RHODE ISLAND COMPANY

THIS TICKET IS EVIDENCE OF PAYMENT OF A
17 CENT FARE
BETWEEN PROVIDENCE AND WARWICK STATION
IN EITHER DIRECTION

Good only for use of passenger to whom issued and on date punched. Conductors must detach this slip from paid in presence of passenger paying fare. If Providence fare is paid with a transfer, conductor must punch in the following square in order to make proper accounting.
Form 7-5

Serial No. **98236** PROV. TRANSFER Pres. and Gen. Mgr.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32

JAN. FEB. MAR. APRIL MAY JUNE JULY AUG. SEPT. OCT. NOV. DEC.

and Crescent Park, the "Coney Island of the East" is well known."

For many years the summer produced the biggest traffic. Resort riding was heavy and a rainy week-end or holiday made a real dent in receipts. Crescent Park, just mentioned, was the main attraction on the east shore of Narragansett Bay. Even in the early 1930's, cars ran from Providence to "The Park" on pleasant Sundays on 2½-minute headway. In the heyday, through cars came from Pawtucket by way of Phillipsdale.

On the west shore of the Bay the heaviest riding in summer was on the Buttonwoods line. The back-log of year-around traffic was greatly swollen by people who lived in summer colonies, such as Conimicut, from which the breadwinner commuted daily. But on week-ends and holidays hordes of people swarmed to Rocky Point and lesser competing beach resorts. Cars were run also to Rocky Point from the Pawtuxet Valley.

Originally built, and for a while operated, as a steam railroad branch, the Buttonwoods line was unusually well engineered and was on private right-of-way so the cars could really roll. The Providence-Woonsocket line also had private right-of-way. It used heavy cars somewhat resembling the middle western interurbans. To watch one glide out of Exchange Place with its yellow dash sign, "Express to Mineral Spring Avenue", was really a thrill.

While open cars were the joy of the riding public, railway managements everywhere became disenchanted with them. Trucks were interchangeable between open and closed cars but there was a duplicating investment in car bodies. As auto traffic increased there was a greater safety hazard for the conductors on the running boards. Most important was the urge to make maximum use of one-man cars. The U.E.R. began scrapping its open cars in the 1920's and around 1933 they became things of the past.

Before ending comments on rolling stock, mention should be made of the cable cars which operated on College Hill before the tunnel under Waterman St. was opened in 1914. At the foot of the hill a street car was hitched to a small "grip-car", so-called because the operator, by pulling a lever, closed a grip on a moving cable under the street surface. The two vehicles climbed the hill together and at the top of the hill the

Snow could create traffic jams then, too!



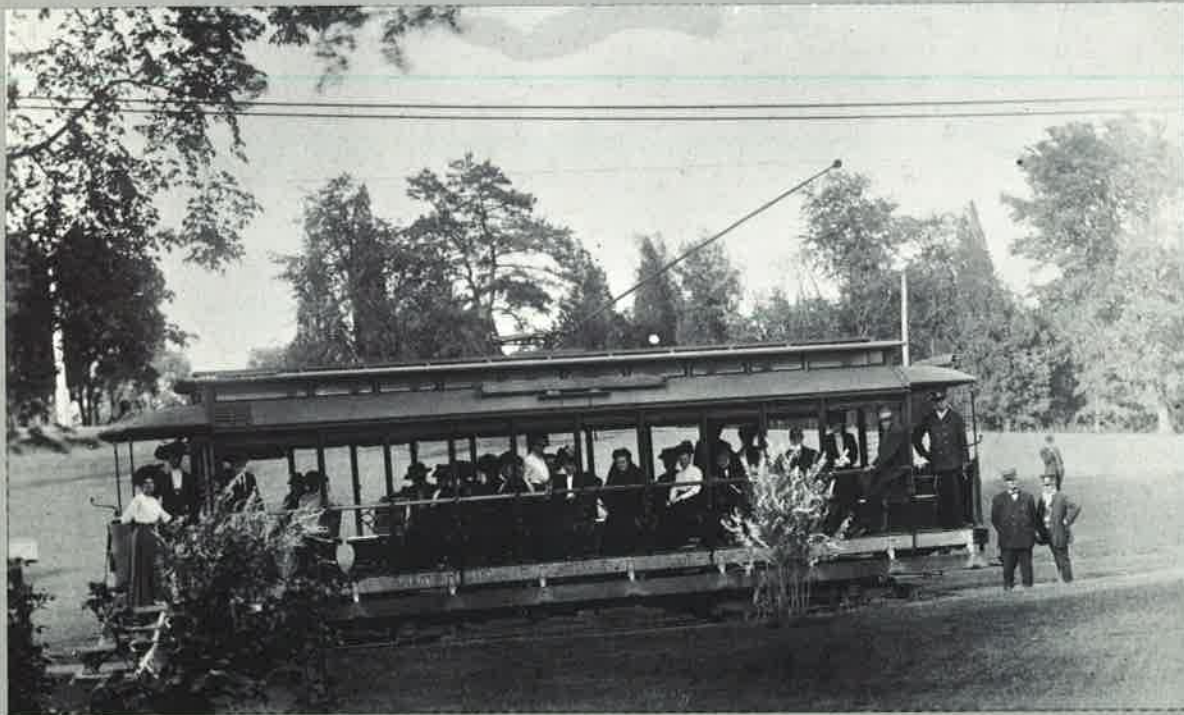
Snow plow car.

passenger car was disconnected and proceeded on its own.

One explanation for the general use of trolley cars was the low cost. The 5-cent fare prevailed on the Rhode Island Co. system until World War I. Various upward adjustments were made, beginning in 1918. When the U.E.R. took over in 1921 fares were six cents with two cents for a transfer. Hoping to stimulate riding with lower fares, the Company began in 1923 selling brass tokens or "checks" at 10-for-50¢, later 9-for-50¢. In 1924 they did some revamping of the zones and raised the cash fare to 8¢ with five white-metal tokens for 35¢. This rate was continued for over twenty years. In the 1930's the Company began selling weekly passes, good for unlimited use. The cost was \$1.00 for rides within the city with higher-priced passes for more extended areas. The system was an early and continuing user of the Rooke automatic fare registers which were manufactured in Providence. The conductor, holding the register in his hand, pointed it at the passenger who inserted his coin in a slot in the front of the register.

The increasing popularity of the private automobile definitely gave the trolley a shove on its down-hill run. Some light-riding lines were abandoned outright but the more usual practice was to replace the trolleys with buses. Necessity for track

Open car trip near Hunts Mills, Rumford.



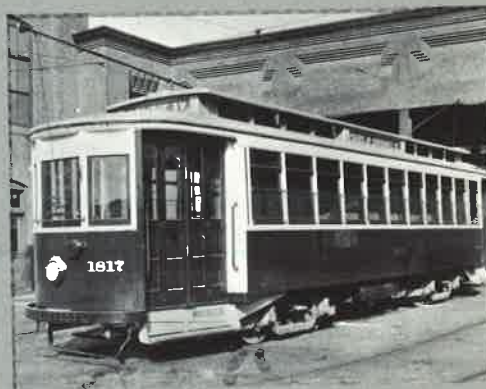
renewal or relocation was an almost certain signal for trolley abandonment. Shortage of motor fuel in World War II put a temporary stop to "Bustitution", (slang for substitution of buses) but after the war the process was resumed. One of the final problems in Providence was the changeover of the East Side tunnel to accommodate buses. This was accomplished and the last trolley pulled into the barn in 1948.

Since this article is for all Rhode Island readers, mention should be made of the trolley systems other than the dominant one to which we have especially referred. The Newport & Fall River St. Ry. Co. (name later changed to Newport Electric Corp.) connected Newport and Fall River, Mass. through Middletown, Portsmouth and Tiverton. It operated local service in Newport and in the summer its cars met steamboats from Providence and took passengers from the dock to Newport Beach. The Newport & Providence Ry. ran from Newport to the head of the island at Portsmouth, whence ferry connections were made to Bristol. It also operated cars from Washington Square, Newport to the Naval Training Station.

The Shore Line Electric Railway Co. had its eastern terminus at Westerly, from which point its lines ran to New Haven. Local service was furnished from Westerly to Ashaway and to Weekapaug and Watch Hill. There also was a line to Norwich, Conn.

Companies headquartered in Massachusetts ran cars into Woonsocket from Worcester and from Milford. Cars came into Pawtucket from the Attleboros and, at one time, from Taunton. Over the Washington Bridge (unless the draw was open) cars entered Providence from Fall River and from Taunton. The line from Fall River, which gave up the ghost in 1919, was best known by its nickname of the "Snake Line" for the many curves on its route through Swansea and Seekonk.

Enough water has gone over the dam since the end of the trolley era to disprove one theory—that buses could operate profitably where trolleys failed. Bus systems everywhere are in financial trouble. Many have folded up. Some others, as in Rhode Island, have been taken over by state or municipal agencies. The basic fact is that most folks want to jump in their car, drive directly to their destination and park nearby.



Pay-as-you enter car, 1913.

Personally, I wish that late some afternoon the clock would turn back fifty years to my student days at Brown. I would like to stand again at the corner of Thayer and Waterman and watch the rush-hour trolleys stream from the tunnel in almost unbroken line. That was fun.



THE RHODE ISLAND CO.
TRANSFER TICKET FROM
HOPE STREET
LINE
IN-BOUND

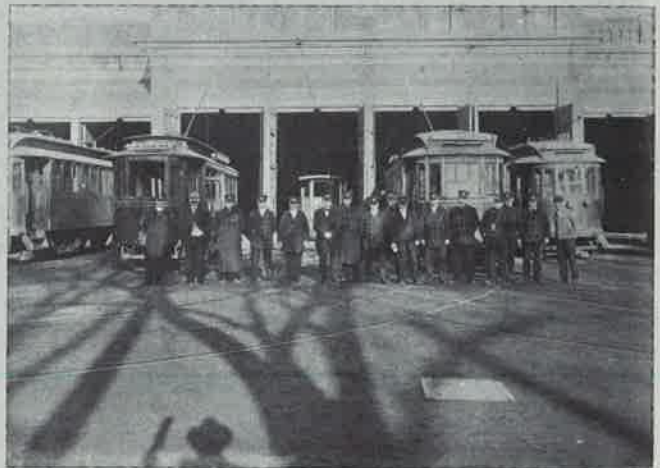
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TRANSFER PT.	DESTINATION
Canal St.	Admiral St.
Market Square	Atw. Beach Ave.
Canal St.	Branch Ave.
Dorrance St.	Broad St.
Canal St. Mat. Sq.	Broad St.
Brook Water Sts.	Brook St.
Thay. Water Sts.	*Brown St.
Thay. Water Sts.	Butler Ave.
Dorr. West Sts.	Butter Woods
Dorr. West Sts.	Chalkton St.
Market Square	Charles St.
Dorr. West Sts.	Grant St.
Market Square	Daniel St.
Dorr. West Sts.	Dexter St.
Market Square	Douglas Ave.
Canal St.	Dyer Ave.
Exchange Place	East Greenwich
Dorr. Way Sts.	Eddy St.
Thay. Water Sts.	Elmer Ave.
Dorr. West Sts.	Elmwood Ave.
Market Square	Friendship St.
Market Square	Governor St.
Canal St.	Hartford Ave.
Exchange Place	Mantol Ave.
Canal St.	North Main St.
Canal St.	Ocean St.
Market Square	Olney St.
Thay. Water Sts.	Phillips St.
Market Square	Plainfield St.
Thay. Angell Sts.	Prairie Ave.
Thay. Angell Sts.	Promenade St.
Thay. Angell Sts.	Reservoir Ave.
Dorr. West Sts.	River St.
Market Square	River St.
Thay. Water Sts.	Rumford St.
Market Square	Smith St.
Canal St.	Smith St. Area
Market Square	South Main St.
Market Square	Yankee Ave.
Dorr. West Sts.	Union Ave.
Dorr. West Sts.	Union Station
Thay. Water Sts.	Waterman St.
Dorr. West Sts.	Westminster St.

EMERGENCY
SEE CONDITIONS ON BACK

PHILA. CO. TICKET COMPANY, PHILA., PA.

Elmwood car house and Rhode Island company employees.



A rebuilt horse-car used as a pay car where employees could pick up their pay at different locations.

