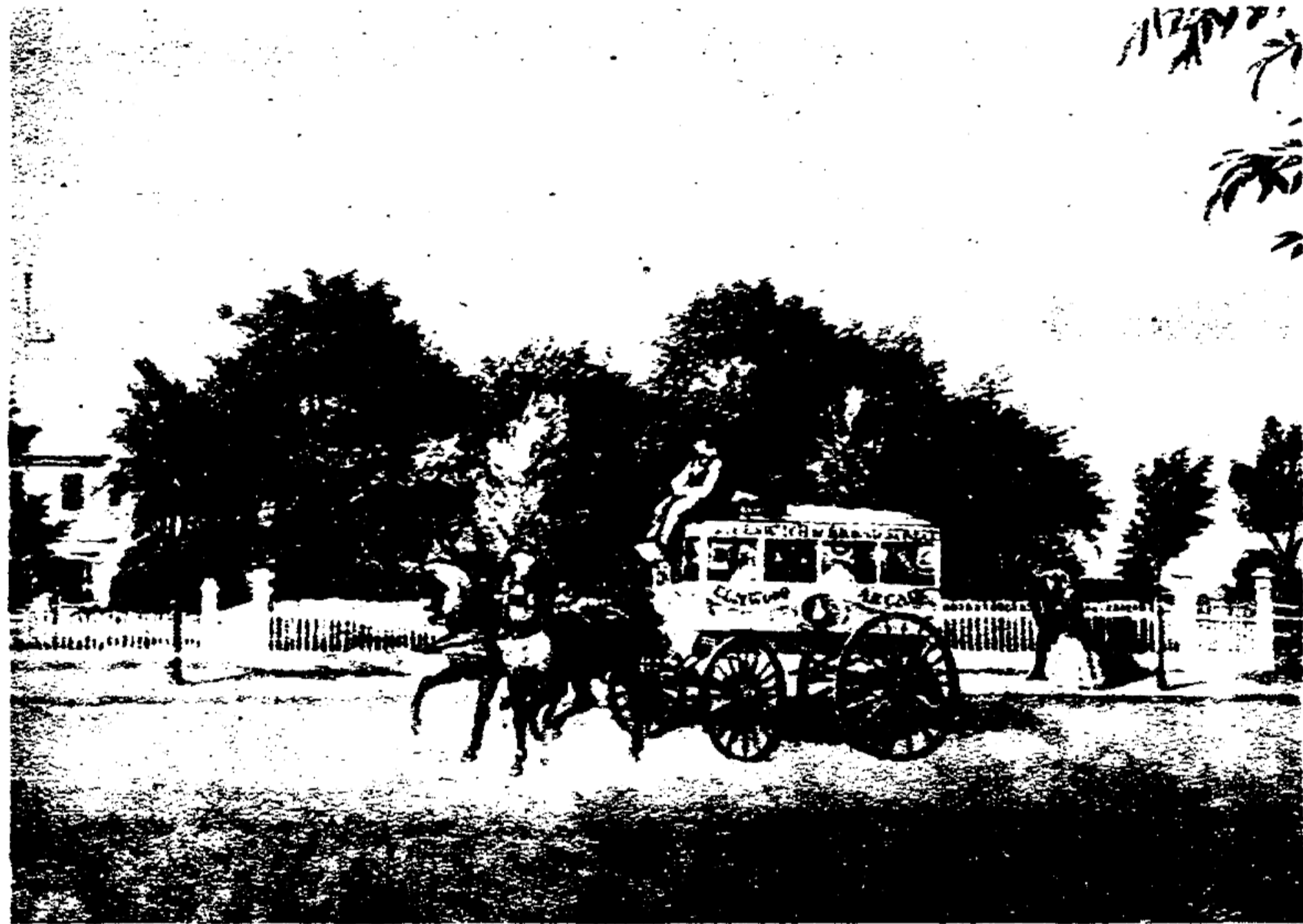
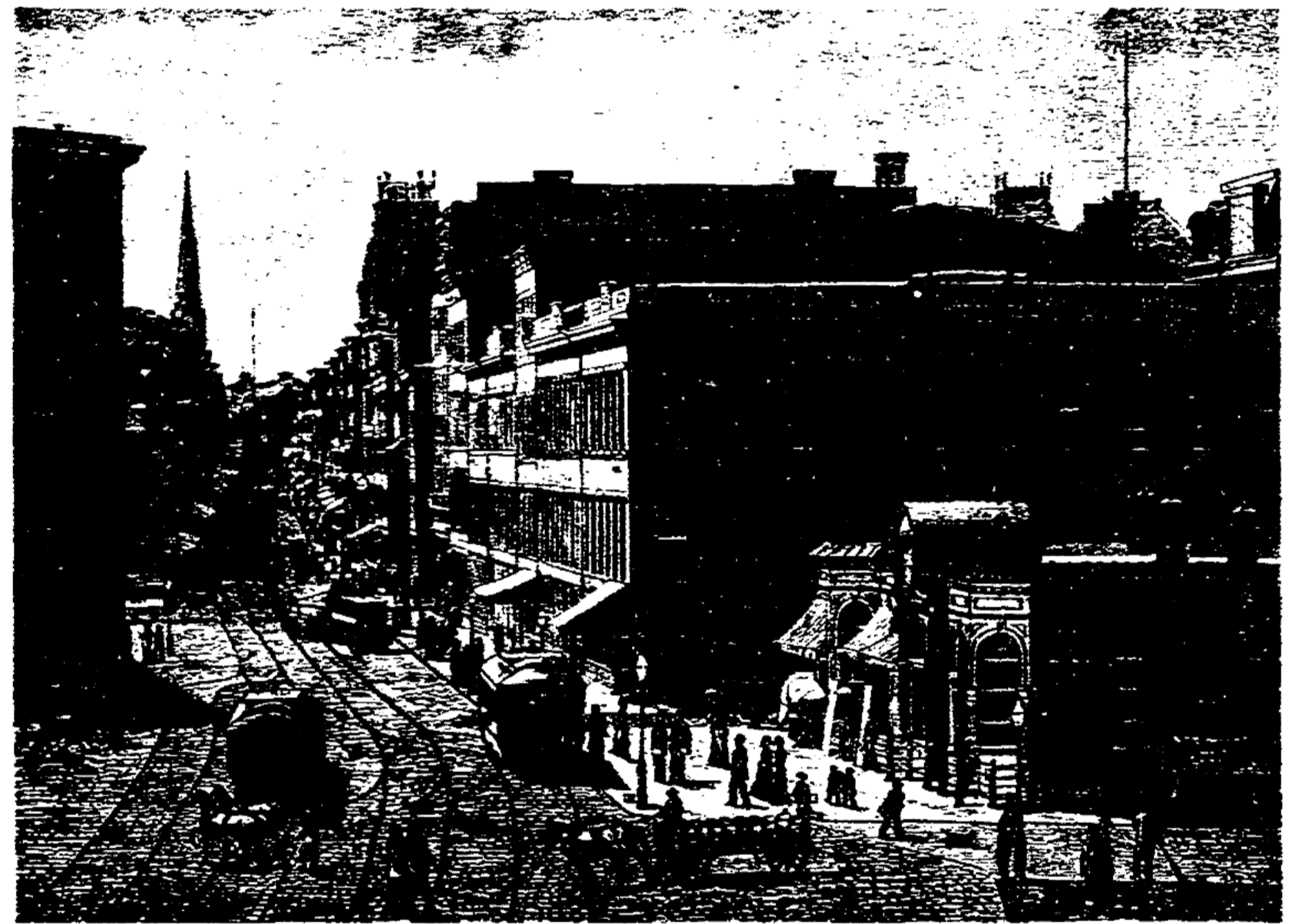




EXIT. Doomsday for the old-fashioned streetcar was getting nearer by the minute last week as this one emerged from the tunnel and swung out on its East Side run.



AGE OF THE OMNIBUS. Contemporary painting shows gaudy blue bus of 1855 which ran from the Arcade to Elmwood via Greenwich Street, now Elmwood Avenue.



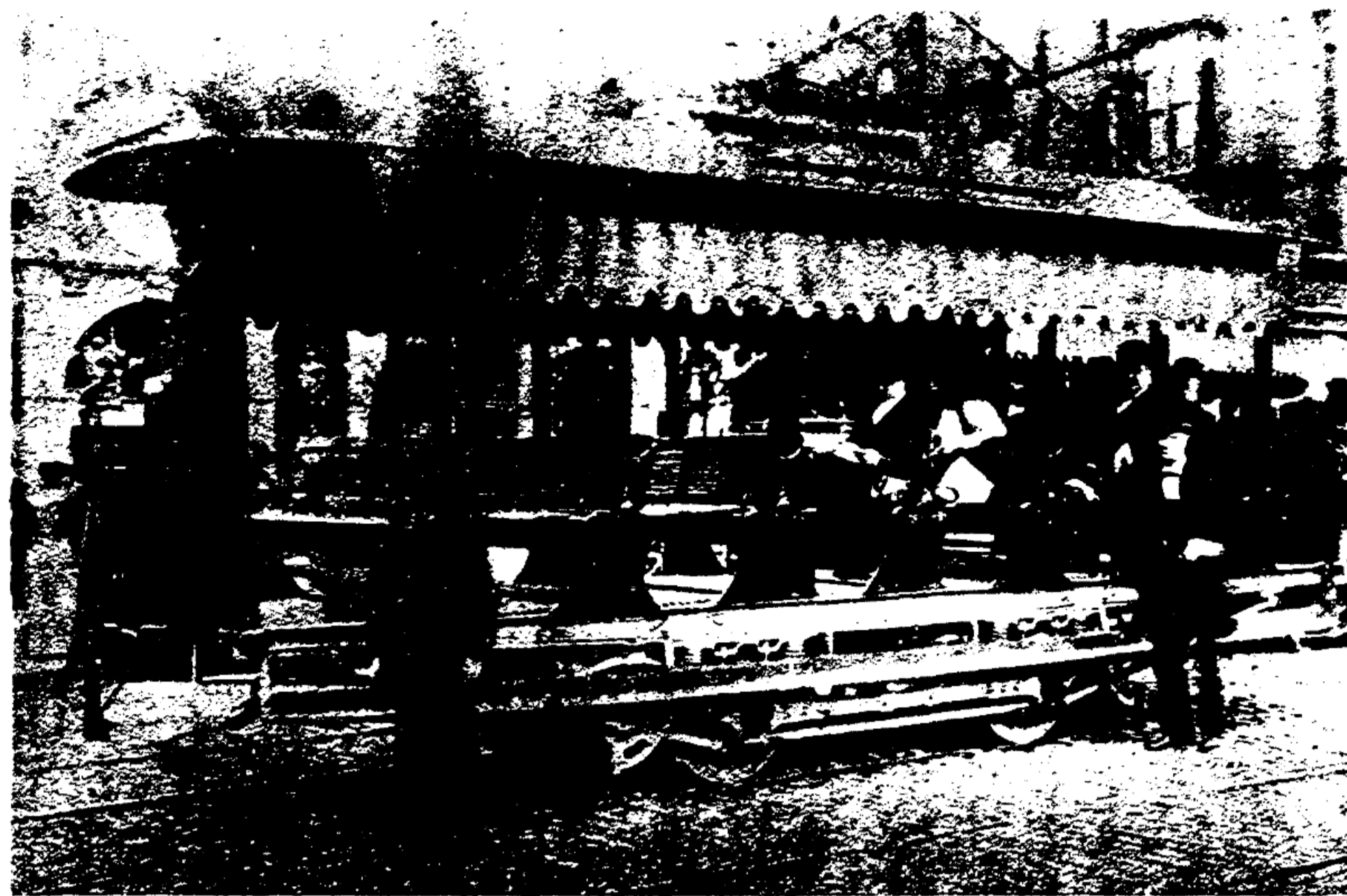
ENTER THE HORSECAR. In 1864-65, Providence got horsecars to replace the omnibusses. Engraving shows old terminal (right) over the river at Market Square.



MADE IN PROVIDENCE were many of the early horsecars. This one, for the High Street-Olneyville run, was built at the Union Railroad shop, Thurbers Avenue.



AND IN 1888, just before the streetcar horse started to amble toward the Last Roundup, this open car on the Elmwood line and its crew were photographed.



HERE COME THE ELECTRICS! Single-truck car of the pioneer overhead trolley leaves the Olneyville carbarn. The motorman is dressed for heavy weather.

JOLLY RIDE upon the trolley in the heyday of single trucks. An open car of the Providence-Cranston line sets forth from Market Square, clangety-clang.

THE END OF AN ERA

Horsecars Took the Place of Omnibusses, Electric Trolleys Drove the Horsecars Into the Discard and Now the Streetcars Disappear from Providence Streets

BY ROBERT L. WHEELER

FOR a few years after Sept. 24, 1894, many Rhode Island farm horses walked the acres with a peculiar side-winding gait, as if following the outside of an invisible car track. A picturesque era of transportation ended when Driver John Dodge of the Union Railroad Company pulled in from his last run on the Elmwood line, the last run anybody in Providence would make in a streetcar hauled by a horse.

Enter the electric trolley. Exit the gay old horsecars—red for Elmwood, brown for Broad, green for Olneyville, green and brown for Eddy, yellow for Pawtucket, blue for Broadway.

Now it's the railed electric trolley's turn. Early this morning the Last Streetcar was scheduled to start from the East Side, full of trolley fans full of sentiment, headed for the carbarn, Mexico and the sunset of a transport era in Rhode Island.

People are naturally resistant to change. The first streetcar that ran by an overhead trolley system clanked from Dorrance Street up Broad Street to Pawtucket in an atmosphere heavy with distrust. People were afraid it would explode.

There was also some headshaking back in 1864 when the first Providence horsecar galloped out of Market Square. Many citizens allowed as how the good old jouncy omnibusses that were good enough for father were good enough for them.

Providence was a little slow in catching up to the Horsecar Age, which started in New York City in 1832. Up until the Civil War outlying sections were served by omnibus lines fanning out from Market Square, the civic hub.

In 1861 the General Assembly passed an act incorporating the Providence, Pawtucket and Central Falls, a horse line running from the foot of Canal Street at the Great Bridge of Weybosset to the Pawtucket city line. It opened in 1864. Inside of a year there were five similar lines and in 1865 they were all consolidated into the Union Railroad Company, whose first president was Amasa Sprague.

The Providence, Pawtucket and Central Falls survived as an independent road for seven years.

There is a great body of affectionate reminiscence about the Horsecar Era in Providence. It was the romantic age of transportation. There are a number of men still living who were "hill boys"—youngsters who hooked on extra horses at the foot of the hill, hopped on the running board and handled the horses up the grade.

All the cars had open fronts and there were no vestibules. Drivers worked in the teeth of all kinds of weather. In winter a streetcar charioteer wore the following articles of clothing: two pairs of heavy woolen mittens, woolen shirt, two pairs of trousers, a heavy sweater, uniform coat, 22-pound ulster of ankle length, three pairs of socks and felt boots.

He topped off all this insulation with a full set of whiskers.

The floor of the car was always strewn with straw in winter.

Horsecars had a leather pad for the driver to lean his knees against. Small boys took delight in rushing into the car at the Market Square terminal and shifting this pad to the other dashboard.

In heavy weather—"storm time"—half the trips were canceled and four horses put on each car.

A day's work for a pair of streetcar horses was 15 miles—three trips downtown and back, with rests between trips. The working life of a streetcar horse was from five to seven years.

Fractionous horses were sternly disciplined. One chronic kicker was given a life sentence in the Olneyville barn running a treadmill which cut hay. He was never called anything but "The Haycutter."

Green horses with a tendency to friskiness were sent out with a seasoned span, who worked them into shape.

Once a would-be runaway galloped all the way from the Thurbers Avenue barn to Turk's Head, rounded into Westminster and at Mathewson Street kicked a hole the shape of a horseshoe through the sheet iron dashboard of the car.

Drivers in a hurry to get to the carbarns sometimes jumped the tracks and went home by the shortest route.

A spirit of camaraderie prevailed between drivers and passengers. When a streetcar went off the rails the men passengers got off and lifted it on again.

Horsecar drivers on late runs often repaid this courtesy by lifting men passengers out of the cars and carrying them home, first setting the brakes and tying the reins around the whipstock.

AT THE HEIGHT of the equine era the Union Railroad Co. had about 200 horses. When the great change-over took place it had about 100 in service. They ambled into oblivion as people bravely conquered their fear of electrocution.

Some Providence people remember the brief era of storage battery cars which preceded the Trolley Age proper. Among them is John Hutchins Cady of 127 Power Street, who recalls a day in 1890 when he and some other boys were waiting for a horsecar at the entrance to Roger Williams Park. They couldn't believe their eyes when along came a car going all by itself.

The battery cars were not a success. Due to the number of stops—there were no white poles in those days—they were apt to run out of juice almost anywhere.

The old Union Railroad Co. was taken over by the United Traction & Electric Co. in 1893 as the electrics entered upon an era of expansion.

Pretty soon it became possible to travel almost anywhere by trolley. The New England electrics never succeeded in climbing Jacob's Ladder but before the era was over you could count trolley poles all the way from Providence to Bennington, Vt., Waterville, Me., or New York City.

And the jolly ride upon the trolley wasn't all there was to it, either. Presently the interurbans began picking up enough freight and mail business to give the railroad magnates some headaches.

The Providence-Danielson line even had a funeral car called "The Oregon," in tribute to the stockholders, who were mostly Oregonians.

The inevitable happened. By 1906, to all practical intents and purposes, the electric trolley system of Providence was owned by the New York, New Haven & Hartford Railroad, whose president was Charles S. Mellen, whose owner—to all practical intents and purposes—was John Pierpont Morgan.

Let's get back on the trolley.

The first Providence streetcars that were not rebuilt horsecars, ran on the Broad Street line. They were open platform cars; not until 1899, when vestibule cars came in, did the motorman have any protection from the weather other than the extra clothing he was able to put on or the whiskers he was able to grow. The cars were equipped with Robinson two-wheel radial trucks, three to a car. As time went on, passengers gradually overcame their fear of being fried alive; the Providence Telephone Co. stopped objecting to the overhead trolley system on the ground that it would jam up telephone calls.

The first "bloomer cars" began running to Riverside in 1892. Pretty soon the open cars were running all over the shore area, to Buttonwoods, to Rocky Point, to the Pier, spelling Romance, shore dinners and Sweet Adeline coming home.

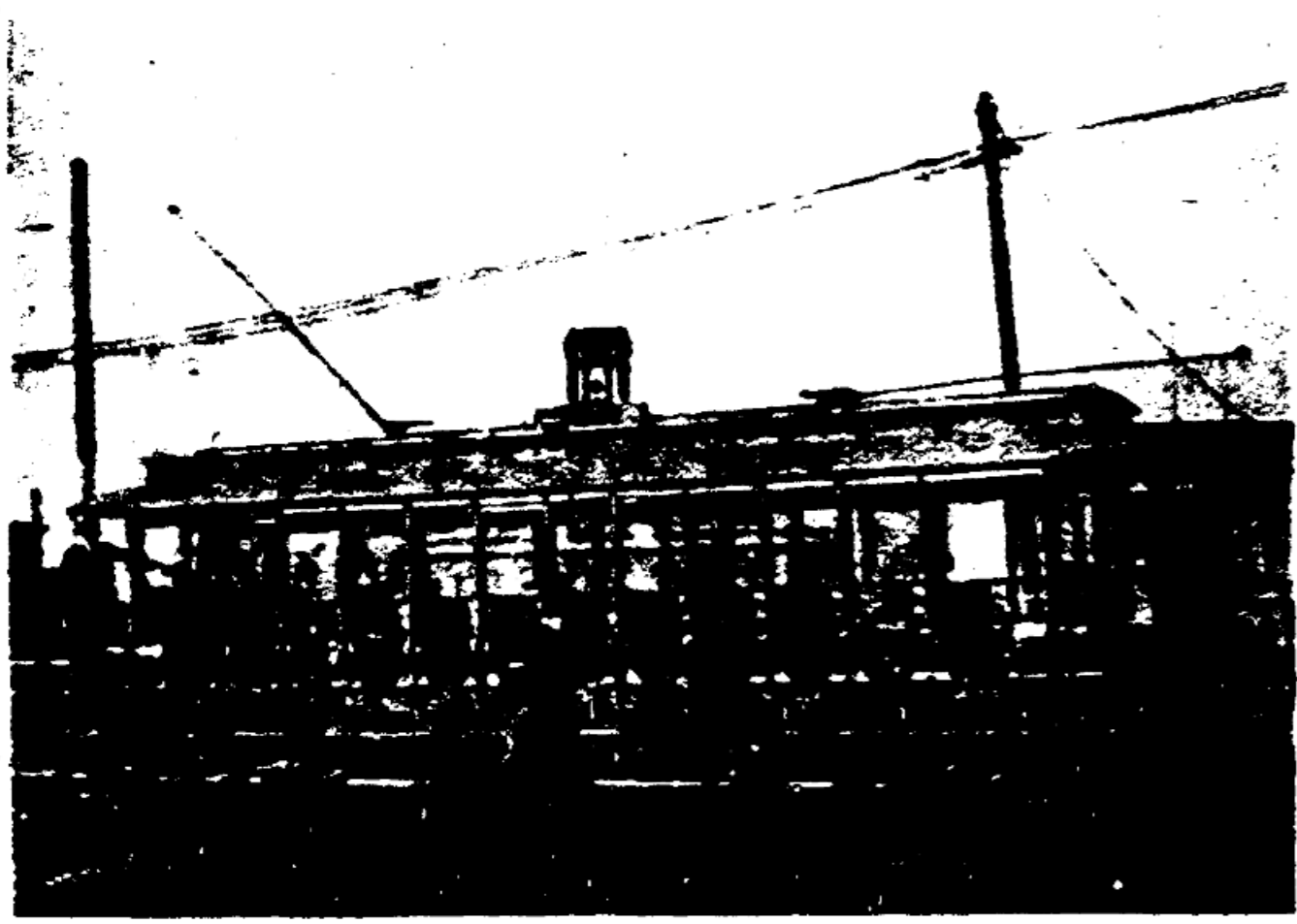
CAREENING down to the sea they went, rocking around the curves like a steamer rounding Point Ju', with the bell dinging, the customers hanging onto their hats and the conductor trying to make change at 50 miles an hour.

Came, in due course, the Motor Age, the age of combustion on wheels. Something new was added on July 3, 1922, when the first motorbus ran to Oakland Beach. And something was lost, too, something went out of American life.

A unique development of the trolley age was the cable railroad up College Street. The first cars that ran up it were hauled by a cable carried over a tremendous wheel operated by steam in a powerhouse at South Angell Street. These cars started running in 1890.

In 1895 a counterweight system was installed. Seventeen and a half tons of dead weight slid up and down a central trench and a "grip car" helped the tramcar up the hill and braked it down again. Operation of the cable railroad cost four men their lives. One was killed when the great counterweight broke from its

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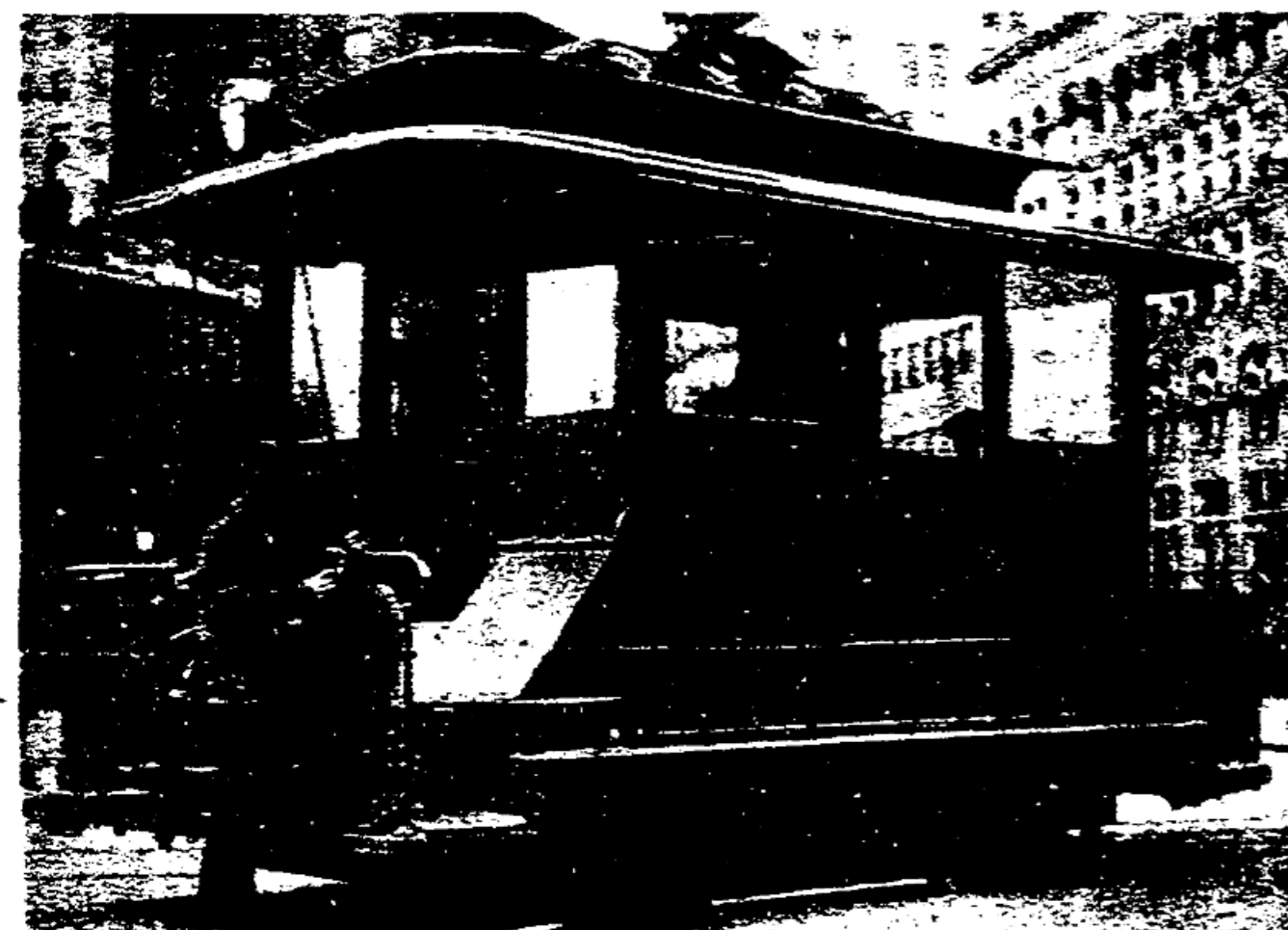
DOWN THE YEARS with the trolleys. This is the standard open 15-bench car that once ran practically everywhere.



FUNERAL CAR of the Providence-Danielson line. Named the "Oregon" as graceful tribute to Western stockholders.



COMBINATION suburban type cars hauled freight as well as passengers, worried railroads. Photo at Union Station.



"GRIP CAR" of pre-tunnel era. As pictured at right, it helped streetcars up and down the hill.



INTERIOR VIEW of type streetcar which had passengers facing each other squarely and making the best of it.



THIS HISTORIC HORSECAR survived into the electric era and had a long and useful life of service, first as pay car, later as official "grinder car" of the United Electric Railways Company, always as "Old 1500."

THE END OF THE STREETCAR ERA

Continued from Preceding Page

cable and crashed a gas main, causing an explosion. Planks of tunnel shoring went sailing and one of them struck and killed Thomas Nelson, a brakeman.

The cable railroad went out of business Aug. 9, 1914, when the Waterman Street tunnel was opened. It used to be said that if you stood on College Hill and asked who owned the railroad you would be told that the Cable Tramway Co. was owned and leased to the Union Railroad Co., which was owned by the United Traction and Electric Co. but was leased and operated by the Rhode Island Co., which was formerly owned by the Rhode Island Securities Co. but sold out to the Providence Securities Co., which was owned by the New York, New Haven & Hartford.

By 1917 the Rhode Island Co. system, whoever owned it, owned a total of 400.45 miles of trackage. With the exception of the eight and one-half miles of steam road between Narragansett Pier and Kingston, all the lines were operated by the single overhead trolley system, 600 volts.

The trolley story is varied and many-sided. It is also history that the first fare transfers were made on July 10, 1902, that badges for motormen and conductors were adopted in 1903, and that one-man cars first appeared upon Broad Street in the fall of 1912.

The United Electric Railways Co. was chartered at the January, 1919, session of the General Assembly for the purpose of acquiring the owned and leased lines of the Rhode Island Co. Several old horsecar lines maintained a kind of vague legal existence until 1934, when petitions were filed in Superior Court for the dissolution of the Providence Cable Tramway Co., Rhode Island Suburban Railway Co., Pawtucket Street Railway Co. and the Union Railway Co.

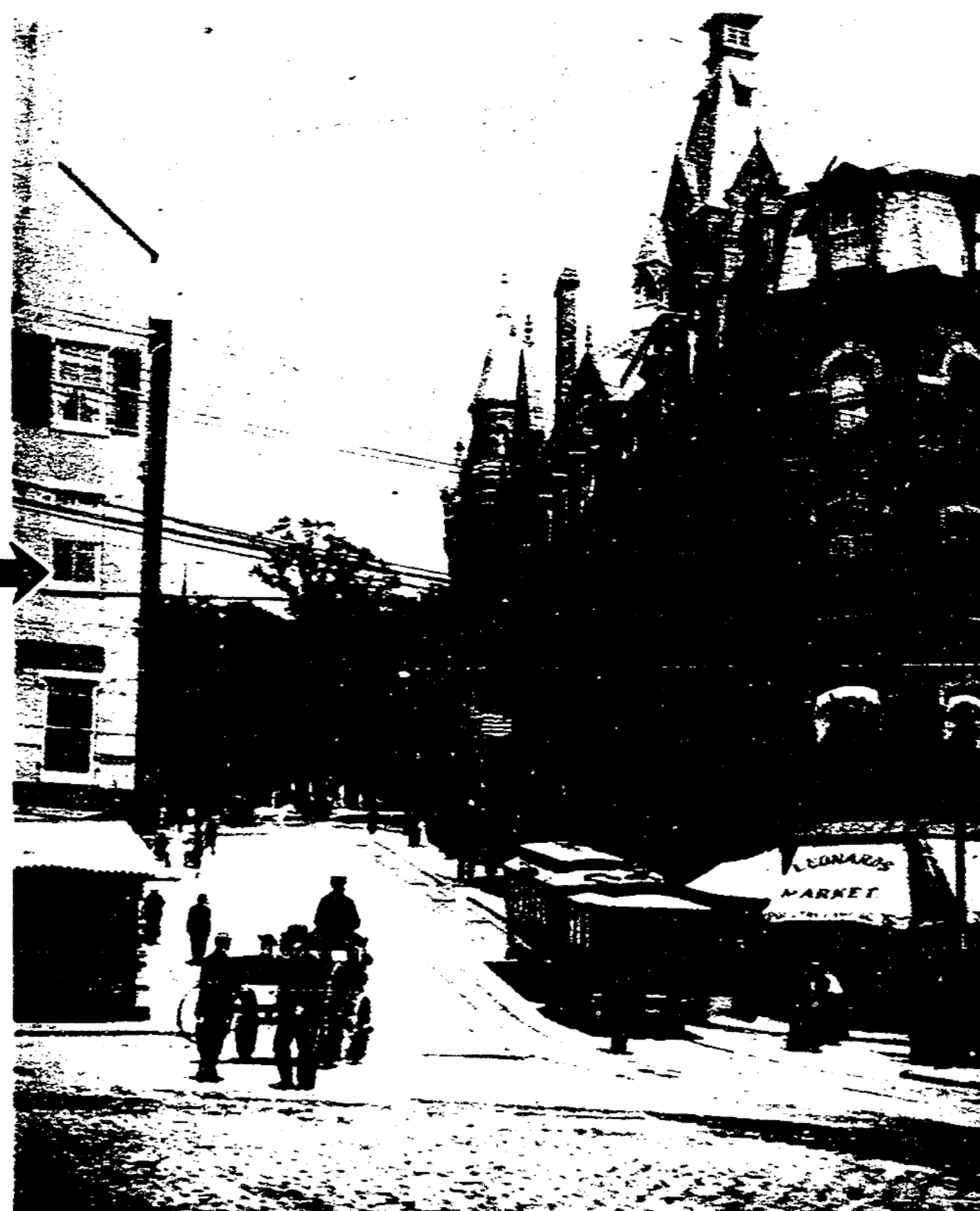
The advent of the bus era was a development of the Motor Age that caused no excitement whatever. By the time the first motorbuses were operating in Providence people had been driving automobiles and riding in them for several years. And when the first trackless trolley ever operated in New England ran on the Weeden-Brook Street line in Pawtucket in 1931, not a single passenger worried about being electrocuted.

We must be getting sophisticated.

But already nostalgia is beginning to set in. The other day a reconditioned motorman of the Broad Street line, whose last streetcar ran March 20, uttered a loud plaint as he tried to bob and weave his bus through traffic.

"Running a streetcar," he lamented, "was just like driving a horse. All you had to do was shake the reins."

Old pictures from Providence Journal-Bulletin library, the Lewis C. Wilcox Collection and U.E.R.; present-day photos by Edward C. Hanson.



CABLE RAILROAD in operation on College Hill, which bore a different aspect than it does today. Road ran by a counterweight system.

fashion hour
by Blair

sleek 'n smooth . . .

keyed
for
grace
and
comfort

at fine stores everywhere
BLAIR CORSET CO., Inc.
Creators of Accent-U
the famous bra supplement



PAINT SCHEME of this car, tried in 1926, was intended to increase visibility of car to pedestrians and motorists by use of light surfaces.



BOUND FOR BRAZIL or somewhere like that is the streetcar whose interior is pictured. We shall not look upon its like again for—



HERE COMES THE TRACKLESS TROLLEY, routing the poor old streetcar from the rails and the East Side, where it made its last stand this spring. Trolley fans mourn.