

The Last Streetcar

Street Cars Abandoned after 52 Years of Service
 ~ BUS SCHEDULE ON ALL LINES NOW IN EFFECT ~
 Horses, Mules, Electricity Used for Transportation

*Eau Claire,
 Wisconsin, Sunday
 Morning, April 10,
 1932 —*

After more than half a century of operation, under various modes of propulsion or locomotion — horse, mule and electricity — the raucous sound of the street car was stilled here yesterday, and in its place was heard the powerful but muffled purr of the big motor busses which now exclusively constitute the transportation system operated here by the Northern States Power Co.

Yesterday motor busses were covering, on a 15-minute schedule, all the lines formerly covered by street cars, and in addition were running into new territory heretofore unserved by the company's transportation system on a 10-minute schedule.

The end of the street car's fifty-two year reign in Eau Claire came

On the cover: *Jacob Welshinger pilots the first of Eau Claire's electric street cars, 1889. Above:* *Jacob Welshinger drives the last of Eau Claire's horse cars, 1889.*

Photographs and article from the archives of the Glenn Curtis Smoot Library and Archives, CVM.



The next to go were the Altoona and East Side hill cars, which were abandoned the first of this year and busses put on in their place. This left the Ninth Ward and Shawtown as the only remaining street car lines in Eau Claire.

All Motormen Retained

In changing from street car to bus, the

Northern States Power Co. has made no changes in its operating personnel. In every case it took the men who were operating the street cars as motor men and gave them a course of training in the operation of busses. All the former motormen are now efficient and capable bus drivers.

Under the schedule and routing the Altoona bus goes through to Vine street, in the Ninth ward, up Vine street to 11th street, and then back over the same route; the East Side hill bus, which loops around by way of Highland avenue and Margaret street on the East Side hill, follows the same route to Third street and out on Third street to Folsom street and back over the same route.

The Shawtown bus, which carries the sign "Ferry street," covers the same route, as the street car line did. No change was made

at midnight Friday when the Shawtown and Ninth ward cars finished their last runs and pulled into the street car barns on Menomonie street.

All-Bus Service

The all-bus service went into effect at 6 o'clock this morning and by noon the 15-minute schedule was being well maintained after some delays during the early morning runs had thrown the schedule off a little.

The transition from street car to bus in Eau Claire began a little over a year ago when the Third ward Omaha station and Pinehurst street car lines were abandoned and busses substituted, and the service, which formerly ended at the Omaha depot was extended to the Seymour road and a loop arrangement in the Third ward increased the coverage there.

in the schedule or routes which have been maintained in the Third Ward, and the North Side in the past, but, next week, it was Stated, there will be a change in routing at certain hours on the North Side hill to provide better service to the Sacred Heart hospital and the Sacred Heart church by routing some of the busses over North Dewey, East Madison street and Germania street.

First Horse Car In 1880

Although there appears to be no definite records available as to just when the first street car made a run over tracks in Eau Claire, the best evidence obtainable appears to establish the beginning of their operation in 1880. Some say it was 1879. However, it appears that it was in 1879 that the Eau Claire Street Railway company was organized for the purpose of furnishing street car service here but that the tracks were not laid and cars started running until the next year.

The first cars were horse cars, drawn by horses, and later mules were substituted. The line ran from Shawtown to the Omaha station over virtually the same route as has been followed almost all the time since, although at one time, while the Grand avenue bridge was being built the cars crossed the river via the Madison street bridge. Also for a time the line also ran up Galloway street instead of Wisconsin. According to the History of the Chippewa Valley the late J. R. (Dick) Harrigan was first superintendent of the street rail system, but some of the old residents say that a Mr. Kapp was the first superintendent and that he was succeeded later by Mr. Harrigan.

It is recalled that one winter in the early eighties, when snow

covered the tracks, Mr. Harrigan operated sleighs over the Third ward line.

Pioneer in Field

Records show that the first electric car was operated over the street car lines here in November 1889, putting the mules and horses out of business, as the busses are putting the street car out.

Eau Claire bears the distinction of being the fourth city in the United States to operate its street cars by electricity, and was the first city in the country to heat its street cars with electricity.

In 1897 the street car system was purchased by Arthur E. Appleyard and the next year the Chippewa Valley Electric Railway company was organized and built the interurban line between this city and Chippewa Falls.

Ingram Acquires Property

In 1905 the Chippewa Valley Electric Railway company and the Eau Claire Light and Power company were purchased by the

late O. H. Ingram. and the transportation system has been part of the power company interests ever since. It became the Chippewa Valley Electric Railway, Light and Power Co.

In 1914 an interurban line was built to Altoona and cars placed in operation over that line. The Ninth ward line had been built several years before

In June 1914, the Wisconsin-Minnesota Light and Power company purchased and took over the Chippewa Valley Railway, Light and Power company, including the street railway and interurban systems, and this company in turn was later taken over by the Northern States Power Company, a Byllesby corporation, which now owns and controls all the properties, including the transportation system.

Some ago the company abandoned the interurban line to Chippewa Falls, when bus competition brought about a terrific operating loss.

Four Passengers on Last Street Car Trip in City

An epoch in Eau Claire's history ended at midnight Friday when four Eau Claire citizens went for a ride on the last street car to be run on the city streets.

Mr. and Mrs. Chris Luebke and Dr. and Mrs. George W. Beebe boarded the car and rode from the Ninth ward to the car barns on Menomonie street, arriving at 12:00 a.m. Saturday, April 9. The car was No. 307 and it was operated by Motorman Robert Nelson. The two couples were the only passengers in the car.

The final trip of car No. 307 last evening marked the close of 52 years of street car service in Eau Claire. The first cars were drawn by mules in 1880 and this service was continued until 1889 when the lines were electrified. The first cars were routed from the Omaha railway station down Galloway street to the center of the city.

Yesterday for the first time in Eau Claire's history, buses served all parts of the city, covering an area many times as great as the first street cars did "way back when—"