

# The Period From 1898 to 1909

With this installment the chronological history of the street railways of Omaha is closed. Succeeding articles will discuss certain phases of modern operation and service.

The first dividend ever declared by a street railway in this city was paid for the year 1898 on the strength of the revenue derived from the Exposition traffic. It was a dividend of 2 per cent. By 1902 a 4 per cent dividend was paid. It is now realized by the management, however, that these apparent profits consisted of money which should have gone to make up a renewal or depreciation fund.

Since 1898 Omaha has grown rapidly and the business of the street railway has steadily increased in proportion. Prior to 1903 some small extensions were made and an amount of track reconstruction accomplished, but in the year before the Omaha Street Railway Company found itself compelled to deal with a vital situation.

The growth of the city and the increase in passenger traffic had outgrown the facilities of the company. Its power equipment was worn out and expensive to operate; its cars were much too small and too few in number and most of the track required reconstruction with heavier rails and a firmer and more costly roadway. Prevailing demands were too much for the road without even considering the needs of the future.

The stock and bond issuing capacity of the company had been exhausted and the proposition had grown to a size too great to be handled readily by local capital exclusively. In addition the time had arrived which appeared opportune to unify the operation of the Omaha lines with the Omaha & Council Bluffs Railway and Bridge Company—a property which had never been able to earn profits operated independently.

To meet the demands and finance the rehabilitation and consolidation of the two systems, a reorganization took place, December 22, 1902, which brought the Omaha and Council Bluffs Street Railway Company into existence. Under this reorganization a large amount of money was obtained from Eastern sources, the capitalization of the property was increased and the Council Bluffs lines and bridge taken over for operation on a 99-year lease.

The first Board of Directors of the new company were as follows; Frank Murphy, Guy C. Barton, G. W. Wattles, W. V. Morse and W. A. Smith, all of Omaha; C. R. Tyler of Council Bluffs; Albert Strauss of New York; Randall Morgan of Philadelphia and Hugh J. McGowan of Indianapolis.

The officers were as follows: Frank Murphy, president; Guy C. Barton, vice-president; W. A. Smith, treasurer and general manager; R. A. Leussler, secretary and F. A. Tucker, general superintendent.

Following the reorganization and the acquirement of additional capital, the Omaha and Council Bluffs street railway systems (except the bridge) were practically made over, rebuilt and re-equipped in all essential respects. In addition many miles of extensions were made to the lines. Following is an attempt to sum up the most important improvements in the briefest possible way:

Modern, 10,000 horsepower, power station constructed and equipped at the foot of Jackson Street, replacing two power stations in Omaha and one in Council Bluffs and causing the scrapping of old machinery formerly used.

New concrete sub-station, built at Twenty-seventh and

Lake Streets, equipped with transformers and rotary converting machines, and conduits for carrying high-tension cables laid to central power station.

All of the light track construction in Omaha replaced with 73-pound girder rail, laid over rock, cinder and gravel foundation and connected with continuous joints.

Complete replacement of and large addition to rolling stock with new and modern cars, the majority being 40 feet long and upwards, on double-trucks fitted with powerful motors.

Large brick car-building and general repair shops constructed at Twenty-sixth and Lake Streets.

Overhead construction thoroughly rehabilitated, including the replacing of wooden with iron trolley poles on principal thoroughfares, and the running of heavy electric feeder cables for the proper distribution of power over the system.

The following extensions of lines were made in Omaha:

Twenty-fourth Street, Leavenworth to Cuming.  
Tenth Street, Bancroft to Boulevard.  
Florence Line.  
Sherman Avenue Line—on Thirty-sixth Street, Ames to Grand and on Grand from Thirty-sixth to Forty-second.  
Thirty-second Avenue, Martha Avenue to Grover street.  
Dodge Street, Fortieth to Nevada and on Nevada from Dodge to Underwood.  
Forty-fifth Street, Grant street to Boulevard avenue.  
Spring Street, Twenty-fourth to Twenty-fifth and on latter street to Vinton.  
Farnam Street, Fifteenth street to Happy Hollow Club entrance.  
Courtland Beach extension to Rod and Gun Club grounds.  
Harney Line, Sixth street, Pierce to Center.  
Thirteenth Street, Dominion to Missouri Ave.  
Forest Lawn Cemetery branch.

North Thirtieth Street, Bristol to Spaulding.  
Fortieth Street, Dodge to Cuming.  
Twenty-fourth Street, Vinton to Leavenworth.

A second, or double, track was put down on the following lines:

Twenty-fourth Street, Ames Avenue to Fort street.  
Fortieth Street, Farnam to Dodge.  
West Leavenworth Street, Forty-fifth to Forty-eighth.  
Q Street, South Omaha, from Thirty-third to Forty-third, several blocks being an extension of both tracks.  
Cuming Street, Twenty-fourth to Twenty fifth avenue.

The service has been steadily improved, and while it is not perfect, the management believes that it compares favorably with the service of any city of similar size.

In forty years the system has grown from two miles of a single-track operated with four horse cars to a modern electric street railway, equipped with the best centralized power equipment that money can buy, maintaining a service over 140 miles of track, having at its disposal upwards of 350 modern cars, and requiring the services of 1,000 men the year round and 1,500 men during the construction season.

It seems proper at this time to submit a few words of appreciation of the man who was the strongest single force in the upbuilding and unification of the local street railways—Frank Murphy. Mr. Murphy died suddenly December 12, 1904, and the city and the company lost one of their most aggressive constructors and wisest advisers.

Mr. Murphy was succeeded as president of the company by Guy C. Barton, G. W. Wattles becoming vice-president. Upon Mr. Barton's retirement in January 1908, Mr. Wattles was elected president and Frank T. Hamilton vice-president.

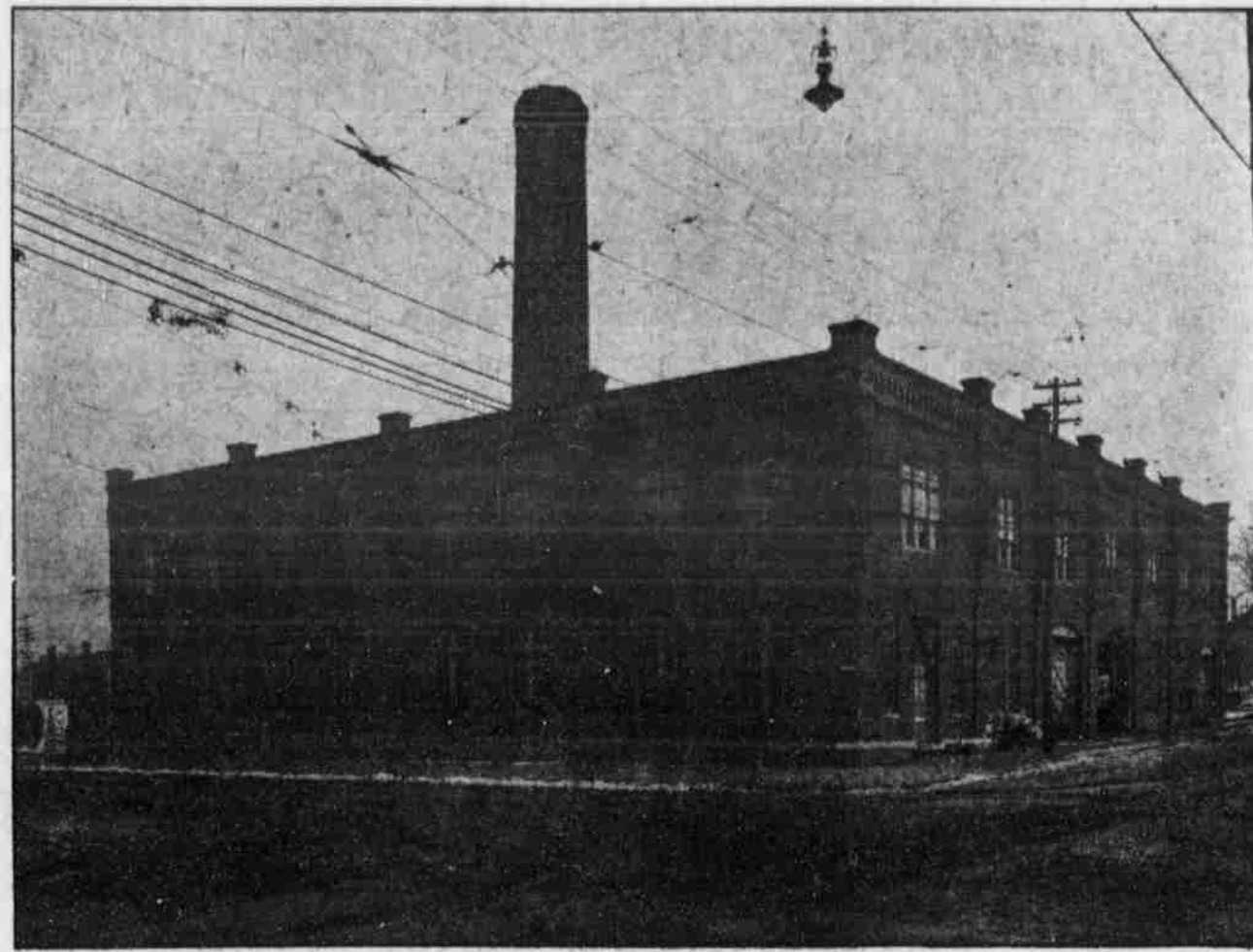
The present Board of Directors is as follows: G. W. Wattles, Frank T. Hamilton, K. C. Barton, L. F. Crofoot, W. V. Morse, W. A. Smith, C. R. Tyler, Albert Stauss and Randall Morgan.

F. A. Tucker, who was general superintendent and a much valued officer for many years, died in November 1906. About this time the title and duties of assistant general manager were assigned to Secretary R. A. Leussler.

It is hoped that the following articles will make clear the policies of the present management and the determination to do its full duty as a public servant.

G. W. WATTLES, President,  
Omaha and Council Bluffs Street Railway Co.

(The "Track and Roadway" Will Be Discussed in Next Sunday's Installment.)



Carhouse at 20th and Harney, Partially Destroyed by Fire Feb. 8th, 1901.