

# The Men On the Cars

The operation of a large street railway system demands the earnest physical and mental effort of a large number of men. The Omaha & Council Bluffs Street Railway Company endeavors to be a just and generous employer, ranking the quality of service as of first consideration. The force has grown year by year from a dozen or so required to run the first horse-cars, to approximately 1,000 men permanently on the pay rolls.



Club Rooms at Car House.

The passing of the fare—cash or transfers—to our conductors now means that upwards of 150,000 business transactions take place on our lines every day. Let the reader imagine himself meeting and doing business with the entire population of Omaha—men, women and children—all inside of about 18 hours and he will begin to appreciate the human chances for error, accident and ill-temper.

Of the force of 1,000, about 600 are conductors and motormen, with a somewhat larger proportion of the former. These are the men whom the public meets and sees and to whom our reputation as an efficient and careful public servant is largely entrusted. They are the men who bear the brunt of contact with people and conditions as they are; who are accountable for the safe transportation of passengers, and who are expected to be always courteous, wise and exact under all conditions.

We think our car men as a body are as loyal, patient and efficient as any force of public service employes in the country. Out of the 600, more or less, 38 have been with the company twenty years or longer; 131 ten years or longer; and 233 five years or longer; stated in another way, 39% of the car men have been in the service five years or more, this despite the fact that street railway conductors and motormen throughout the country do not, as a rule, remain in the service for long periods.

The Omaha & Council Bluffs Street Railway Company's system is operated in four divisions, as follows: Ames Avenue Division, with its car house at 24th and Ames Ave.; Vinton Street Division, with its car house at 24th and Vinton Sts.; Harney Division, with its car house at 20th and Harney Sts.; and Council Bluffs Division, with its car house at 28th Street and Ave. A, Council Bluffs. Each car house is under the supervision of a day Foreman and a night Foreman, who have immediate direction of the car men. The latter are ranked in order of their seniority according to the divisions to which they are attached, the older men having preference of runs, etc.

Ten Road Officers are vested with general direction of car men while the latter are actually on the cars, and with the responsibility of maintenance of schedules, and prompt and safe operation of the cars. Foreman and Road Officers report to the Superintendent of Transportation or Assistant Superintendent of Transportation, who in turn report to the General Manager.

There are, of course, other important departments in the organization, but we are dealing here only with the men on the cars. As the force of conductors and motormen is constantly de-

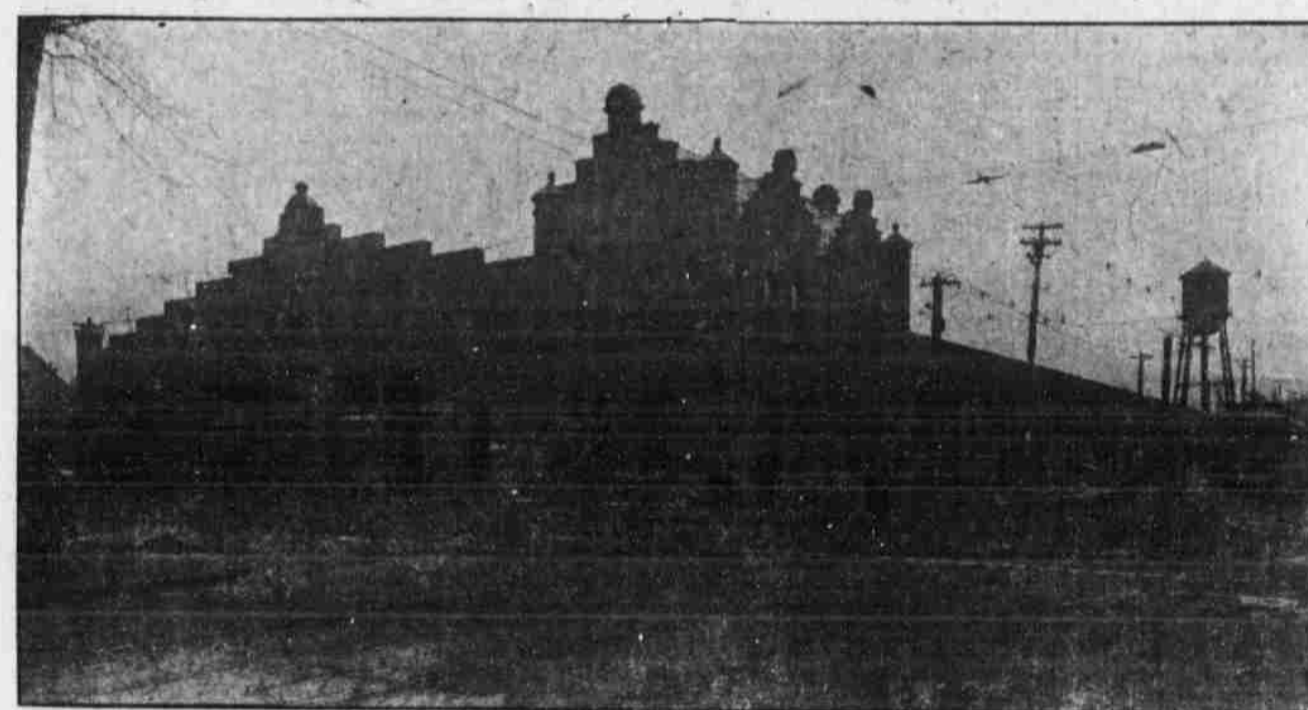
pleted by men leaving the service, either voluntarily or through discharge, it is necessary to keep building it up, although nearly 50% of the men who leave voluntarily return at some time for re-employment. In employing new men, the greatest of care is exercised in selection, and an applicant is carefully scrutinized as to his physical and temperamental adaptation to the work required of him. After that, his past record is thoroughly investigated before he is entrusted with the safety of the public.

New men are required to spend at least twelve days on the cars under the tutelage of old employes, who are paid an additional compensation for the instruction so rendered. They are then further instructed and examined by Road Officers, given some practical experience alone by themselves and finally examined by the Superintendent of Transportation before they are considered regularly employed. It is necessary to maintain an extra list of about 150 men, who must hold themselves in readiness to take the places of absentees from day to day and who are rotated in priority. At the present time, a man usually serves about six months on the extra list before he obtains a regular run. The company prefers to employ married men because of their usually steadier habits and greater sense of responsibility. The positions of Foremen and Road Officers are filled by promotion from the ranks of conductors and motormen.

According to the United States Census Bureau, the wages paid conductors and motormen in Omaha are considerably above the average paid in other cities in the United States. The scale is graduated according to the number of years of service and is as follows: For the first year 21 cents per hour; second year 22c; third year 23c; fourth year 24c; fifth to ninth years 25c; and thereafter 26 cents. The pay of a conductor or motorman begins when he steps on the platform of his car, and stops when he leaves it at the car house.

Men on regular runs work about ten hours per day on the average, as nearly as possible within a space of twelve hours. They may work every day in the year if they choose, or lay off several days a month at their option. The maximum earnings per month are about \$90; the minimum \$60; and the average \$75 for men having regular runs. Men on the extra list average about \$45 per month.

At each car house there are club rooms, fitted with libraries and reading and writing tables for the use and convenience of conductors and motormen waiting to go on duty, or at which they may spend their leisure time.



Car House at 24th and Ames Ave.

In every organization where large numbers of men are employed, it is necessary to have a system of discipline. The method followed by the company consists largely of reprimands, warnings and recording violations of the rules, penalties—such as taking men from regular runs and placing them on the extra list for short periods—and as a last resort, discharge from the service.

Every man employed is an important unit of the system and necessary to the operation of the road. The co-operation of all is a prime requisite if the best interests of the public and the Company are to be served. Towards impressing this cardinal principle, the company about a year ago inaugurated a series of lectures or talks for the benefit of employes, in which various phases of operation were taken up, discussed in a practical way and the logic of methods and rules fully explained. These meetings have resulted in so much good that they will be continued as a permanent feature.

The employes of the company have an organization to which all employes are eligible, called the Omaha & Council Bluffs Street Railway Employes' Relief Association. It is conducted absolutely by the men themselves, although the Company lends encouragement. Membership is voluntary and the dues are 50 cents per month. One dollar a day is paid sick or disabled members after the first 6 days of disability for a period not exceeding 6 months. A death benefit of \$100 to cover funeral expenses is paid in case of death. The Association is in a flourishing condition and now has about 600 members.

The company and its employes have had the good fortune never to have experienced difficulty which could not be adjusted without a strike or lockout.

G. W. WATTLES, President,  
Omaha & Council Bluffs Street Railway Company.

(Next Sunday's Article Will Deal With the Increased Cost of Operation.)