



Public Utilities



STREET RAILWAY EXPANSION

Many New Sections Reached by the Trolley Lines.

WHAT THE COMPANY IS DOING

Money Comes in Nickel at a Time and Goes Out in Large Sums for Running Expenses and Improvements.

A very typical public service corporation in a street railway company. It uses up a large part of the city's streets and all have to make use of what it has to offer. Very few people have anything more than a very vague and uncertain idea of

how big a company the Omaha and Council Bluffs Street Railway company really is. If everyone rides in a street car once a day, rides back from his destination, it can truthfully be said that half of Omaha carries on a business transaction with the street car company once a day. There are 125,000 to 150,000 rides taken every day and at least 40 per cent of these passengers take transfers and ride a second time. It is probable that not a person in Omaha who is not bedridden goes through a year without riding a good many times on the trolley cars, and most of us must ride two or four times every day.

No other company caters to such a wide variety of patrons and no other company reaches so thoroughly all classes and conditions of men. The street cars are so necessary and noticeable a phase of our daily existence that we are apt to think of them as a part of the public streets

and the affair of the tax payer and not of the investor of capital. For this reason no other company gets so much advice as to how the business ought to be run. As an official of the company recently remarked, "Anybody thinks he can run a street railway system, just as anybody thinks he can run a newspaper or a republican government."

First Street Railway.

In 1867 when the first public spirited group of enthusiasts who believed that the straggling, unkempt little town on the banks of the Missouri would some day amount to enough to make public transportation something of a problem, the idea of a street railway was agitated and resulted in the formation of the Omaha Horse Railway company. This enterprise was doomed to heavy vicissitudes of fortune, to defeat and discouragement and disappointment and it seemed for many years that it was premature and useless to the town but it started the business and that was the important thing.

It was supported by local capital entirely. Omaha had a population of no more than 10,000 and outside capital would have found absolutely nothing attractive about the proposition. Among the men who were brave enough to push it and stand behind it were A. J. Hanscom, Augustus Kountze and Ezra Millard, some of Omaha's oldest and most steadfast boosters. G. W. Frost was the first president.

Construction began at Ninth and Farnam and the line ran westward and northward ending finally at 21st and Cuming street. Delegates to the capitol, which stood where the old high school building is now, and the stockholders were about the only people who took the trouble to use it in those days.

The equipment to start with was four cars and about thirty horses. One other car was bought in Chicago, the first one ever brought to Omaha to be used on a street railway, but it proved to be worthless. It was second hand omnibus and had to be discarded. It is still in the possession of the company. The service was once every fourteen minutes and the cars made a little better than four miles an hour. Fare was 10 cents, and was collected by the driver. The conductor being dispensed with as a useless encumbrance.

The receipts of the company were about \$30 a day. Now they are nearly \$6,000.

Cable System.
By 1883 the business was fairly prosperous, but cable tramways were beginning to find

favor in other cities and a company was organized and entered the field to carry passengers by cable power. Five years later electricity was a second newcomer and the Omaha Motor company was formed to boost trolleys.

Omaha now had three companies. They had parts of their tracks all on the same streets, they quarrelled continually with one another and passengers had to pay double fares unless some single line could carry them their whole journey.

This condition could not last very long and after buying up the cable company the original company started in to run electric cars. This brought the motor company to time and in the same year, 1889, that company was also made a part of the single system.

Since then, with the natural growth of the city and with the efforts of the street railway company to give efficient service, has come the growth which makes the enterprise so important today.

The outlay of money to keep such a company going is enormous, especially when it is figured in nickel fares. Running along the streets of Omaha, South Omaha, Council Bluffs, Benson, Dundee and Florence there are 150 miles of street railway track. Disregarding the cost of laying this network of steel the cost of keeping it going after it is once started is big enough to use up a large share of the profits.

As the average life of a piece of steel track under trolley car wear is about ten years at least fifteen miles of the track must be relaid every year. This does not represent the total track expense by a large sum, however, as new extensions are in the process of building all the time.

Many Improvements.

In the down-town districts alone the company spent \$125,000 for construction in the first seven months of the present year, and this figure does not include the new power houses and car barns that are being raised. The general manager of the road is practically a constructing engineer and he has on his hands fifty or more big undertakings all the time. Tracks, bridges, and rolling stock all need constant improvement. During the last few months the gangs were at work rebuilding tracks over the following parts of Omaha's principal streets: Cuming from Sixteenth to Twenty-fifth avenue; Dodge, Tenth to Sixteenth; Twelfth, Douglas to Howard; Fourteenth, Davenport to Howard; Portieth, Farnam to Dodge; Seventeenth, Webster to Cuming; and Harney, Tenth to Fifteenth streets.

All summer long a gang of about 400 men is on the pay roll, and, in the eight years since the present company was organized, under its present name and management, practically every building, every stretch of track, and every piece of the rolling

stock has been remodelled or replaced with something more up-to-date.

The cars of the Omaha company travel at the average rate of nine miles an hour. The energy for their work is generated from 150 tons of coal. The engine rooms of the company consume 5,000 tons a month, and the coal bill amounts to about \$200,000 a year.

The pay roll amounts to at least \$1,000,000 a year, or 30,000,000 nickel fares. Besides this, the company pays out \$200,000 a year in city, state, and county taxes, and several hundred thousand dollars for operating expenses. Improvements have cost \$250,000 thus far in 1910.

Total Business Enormous.

These figures give some idea of the enormous business that the street railways and the people carry on with each other. The size of the traffic is emphasized when one realizes that all the income is from small transactions at 5 cents each. The total receipts amount to a little more than \$150,000 a month for lines within the city of Omaha alone.

Two new and elaborate structures are now under way which will greatly improve the Omaha system. One is the power station at Fifth and Jackson and the other the car house at Tenth and Pierce. The power house will represent an outlay of

about \$400,000 before it can be used as a power house. This will include a building that will house enough machinery to run Omaha street cars for many years to come and enough machinery to meet the needs for a short time.

One unit of 1,000 kilowatt capacity will be

put in at first. Then, when the capacity must be extended, which will be almost as soon as the plant is completed, two more units of 2,000, or possibly 3,000, kilowatts each will be put in, and the total investment will amount to more than \$1,000,000.

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