

The Conestoga Traction Company

1899—1931

by Richard D. Shindle

PREFACE

In the late 1890's and early 1900's the electric street railway car represented the ultimate means of travel to the average individual.

Electric cars were used to travel between Lancaster City and the many communities of Lancaster County, thereby making the city the commercial and transportation center of the county.

The Conestoga Traction Company after acquiring the traction system in 1899 developed it into one of the finest electric street railway systems in the United States.

Although the Conestoga Traction Company also operated a freight service, this study is devoted only to the passenger service segment of the company.

It is impossible to prepare a story of this nature without the help of numerous individuals. I would therefore like to take this opportunity to thank the many persons who helped to make this story possible.

Special thanks to my wife Jean and my friend Mary Buckwalter, whose advice helped me in the writing of this story.

THE CONESTOGA TRACTION COMPANY

In September 1947, a form of transportation which had served the community of Lancaster since 1874 came to its conclusion. A trend which the Conestoga Transportation Company had begun 15 years earlier, to combat the encroachment of the automobile upon their passenger business, was finally completed when the last trolley cars were replaced by buses. As a prerequisite to the changeover from the use of trolleys to buses in transporting passengers, the company changed its

name from the Conestoga Traction Company to the Conestoga Transportation Company in December 1931.

Organized on January 16, 1900,¹ and beginning its legal existence on February 1 of the same year, the Conestoga Traction Company was to build one of the finest electric street railway systems in the United States. The company was formed in November 1899 to purchase the property of the bankrupt Pennsylvania Traction Company which consisted of all the electric street railway lines in Lancaster County.

Receiving their charter on December 12, 1899,² the new traction company immediately made preparations to extend their lines to New Holland, Ephrata and Strasburg. President of the new corporation was William B. Given of Columbia who was instrumental in the building of that borough's electric street railway systems. Other officers of the company were Treasurer O. M. Hoffman and General Manager Frank S. Given, brother of the president. The Board of Directors consisted of William B. Given, Samuel R. Shipley, William B. Kurtz, both prominent businessmen of Philadelphia, and John D. Skiles of Lancaster.

Both the Ephrata and New Holland lines were built under a charter awarded to the Lancaster, Mechanicsburg and New Holland Railway Company on May 16, 1899. The two lines were built simultaneously with the Ephrata route beginning service on December 11, 1900, and the New Holland branch in January 1901.³

Other lines introduced during 1901 were the Manheim and Strasburg routes. The Manheim line, chartered on November 5, 1900, as the Lancaster, Petersburg and Manheim Street Railway Company, was completed early in December, 1901. Open as far as Petersburg on December 12, the traction company's cars entered Manheim on December 14, 1901. The Strasburg line was constructed under a charter accorded to the Lancaster, Willow Street, Lampeter and Strasburg Railway Company on November 13, 1900, and initiated service to Strasburg on December 18, 1901.⁴ At first service was only offered during evening hours but was eventually expanded to include day service as well. Another inconvenience in the early stage of the line's existence was the necessity of its patrons to walk across the highway bridge over the Conestoga River at Engleside. This short walk was required because the trolley bridge over the Conestoga was not erected at the time the line was opened for business. Passengers bound for Strasburg boarded the South Queen Street trolley in Centre Square for the trip to Engleside where they made connections with the Strasburg car on the south side of the Conestoga River.⁵

Prior to the opening of the above mentioned lines, the Conestoga Traction Company offered the benefit of rapid transit service to four other Lancaster County communities, namely, Millersville, Columbia, Marietta and Lititz.

The Millersville route, the oldest on the traction company's system, began as a horsecar line on November 28, 1874. Organized in



Center Square, Lancaster, about 1896 F.W. Schneider III print - courtesy of L.P. Cummings

the early months of 1874, the Lancaster and Millersville Passenger Railway was constructed to replace a stagecoach line operating between Lancaster and Millersville, thus providing a more reliable means of transportation for the residents of Millersville, and students of the State Normal School. Construction of the 5.8 mile street railway occurred on July 29, 1874, with Albert Blackford, superintendent of construction, and Captain Charles Dennis, secretary of the line, sharing the honor of driving the first spike to commence the building of the road. Completed by early November, a trial run over the line was conducted by J. C. Cowell, manager of the new street railway company, on November 27, 1874, with regular passenger service beginning the following day.

On December 7, 1874, the company initiated service on its city route which operated between the old Pennsylvania Railroad Passenger Station, at the intersection of North Queen and Chestnut Streets, and Columbia and West End Avenues.

Little is known about the early operations of the company, but the line was acquired in 1876 by John G. Brenner, who leased it to Dr. W. P. Hiestand. The following year the route was extended to the company's new stables on Frederick Street in Millersville. John C. Hager, who later became a prominent figure in the Lancaster City Street Railway Company, obtained the line in 1882.

Horsecars were used on the route until it was purchased for \$72,000 on May 1, 1891, by the West End Street Railway Company.

Modification of the gauge of the road to correspond to the city lines and electrification of the route were begun immediately by the new owners. The first electric car commenced operating between Lancaster and Millersville on July 1, 1891.⁶

THE PENNSYLVANIA TRACTION COMPANY

Construction of the route between Lancaster and Columbia was initiated by the Lancaster Traction Company in the spring of 1893. Acquiring their charter on March 7, 1893⁷ the Lancaster Traction Company leased the property and rail system of the Lancaster City Street Railway Company two days later on March 9.⁸ In addition to constructing the Columbia route, the new traction company was also extending their city lines to provide service to the residents of the Eighth Ward, this line later becoming the Laurel and Filbert route.

John A. Coyle, President of the Lancaster City Street Railway Company, was also the presiding officer of the Lancaster Traction Company. On March 8, 1893, the following individuals were elected to serve on the board of directors of the company, which had a capital of \$25,000: A. D. Rohrer, Bernard J. McGrann, J. W. B. Bausman, Edward McGovern, M. L. Herr, Jacob B. Long, John C. Hager, Walter M. Franklin, Michael Reilly, John A. Coyle, all prominent Lancaster businessmen, and James Young, a resident of Middletown.⁹

In an endeavor to provide the citizens of Lancaster City and County with the benefit of a first class traction system, the Lancaster Traction Company erected a new car barn in the five hundred block of North Queen Street in Lancaster. Construction of the \$20,000 facility began on May 6, 1893.¹⁰

Built to supplement the car barn on North Prince Street which had been in use since the late 1880s, the building was utilized by Lancaster's various street railway companies until it was sold by the Conestoga Transportation Company on July 15, 1938.¹¹

Four days after construction was initiated on the new structure, the Lancaster Traction Company was purchased for approximately one million dollars by a syndicate known as the Pennsylvania Traction Company. President of the new transit company was ex-United States Senator John J. Patterson.¹²

Under the direction of the new company, chartered July 19, 1893,¹³ the Columbia route was pushed to completion. However, the traction company became involved in a dispute with the Pennsylvania Railroad over the right of the street railway company to use the bridge spanning the P.R.R. tracks in Mountville. Because of this controversy the route was opened only as far as the eastern approach of the bridge on July 14, 1893.¹⁴

Although passenger service to Columbia was inaugurated on August 25, 1893, the company was unable to provide through service on

the line until August 27, 1893. On the previous day an agreement was reached between the two corporations whereby the street railway company would purchase the bridge from the railroad for \$10,000. Employees of the traction company immediately began placing the missing sections of rails into position thereby providing a continuous rail link between Lancaster and Columbia.



West-End street Railway Car #28 built by Brill in 1890, later used by C.T.C. West-End Park became Maple Grove Park in later years. Courtesy of L.P. Cummings

Prior to August 27 passengers bound for Columbia were required to disembark from the Lancaster cars at the eastern approach to the bridge and walk approximately one block distance to board the Columbia cars on the western side of the span.¹⁵

On February 6, 1894 the Pennsylvania Traction Company gained legal control of the electric railway system of the Lancaster Traction Company which included all the city lines and the Millersville and Columbia suburban route. The following day the company purchased the Columbia and Ironville Railway and the Columbia and Donegal Railway systems thus gaining control of all the electric street railway lines in Lancaster County.¹⁶

Immediately after the conclusion of negotiations for the Columbia electric street railway systems a meeting was held by the stockholders

of the Pennsylvania Traction Company during which time they elected a Board of Directors. Chosen to serve as directors of the Company were: John J. Patterson, J. Hay Brown, John D. Skiles, B. J. McGrann, John Hertzler, Michael Reilly, John S. Graybill, James Young, Carl F. Espenshade, J. W. B. Bausman and Dr. M. L. Herr. The Board of Directors of the traction company in turn elected John J. Patterson, President and John Hertzler as Secretary of the corporation.¹⁷ Hertzler was an officer of the Lancaster Trust Company.

Construction of the Columbia and Ironville Railway began in the fall of 1892 and was opened as a belt line for Columbia on December 21, 1892. Chartered, May 12, 1891,¹⁸ to build a route between Columbia and Ironville, the traction company was unable to obtain the necessary right of way so they turned their efforts toward building a belt route in the borough of Columbia. President of the system was William B. Given, who was later to become president of the Conestoga Traction Company. Other officers of the street railway company which had a capital of \$100,000 were: Joseph Janson, Treasurer and Frank S. Given, Secretary and Superintendent. Janson was associated with the Iron Rolling Mills in Columbia.

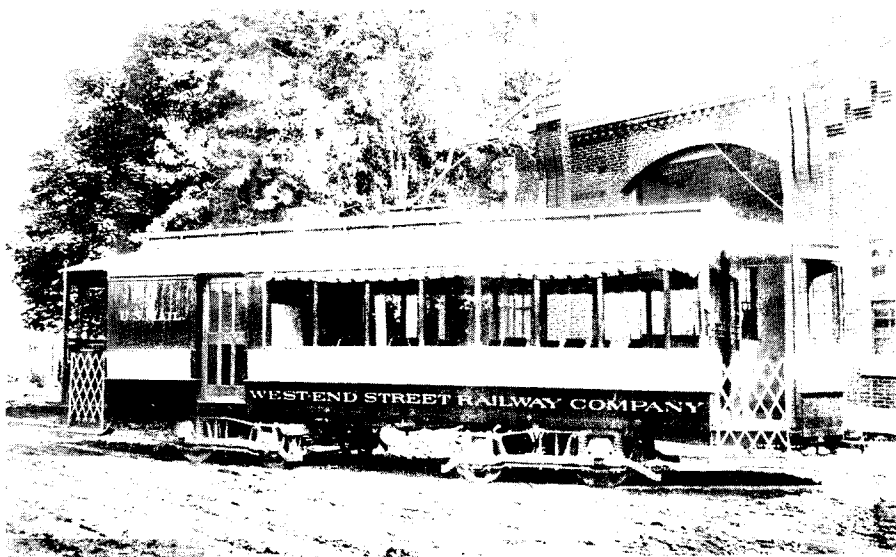
Progenitor of Columbia's street railway, who was also the first president of the company, was Milton Wike who obtained the right of way through the town and secured the charter for the company.¹⁹

Encouraged by the success of the belt lines the owners of the Columbia and Ironville Railway applied for and were granted a charter, on January 4, 1893, to provide service between Columbia and Marietta. Construction of the Columbia and Donegal Railway was initiated on May 8, 1893. Completed as far as Chickies Park by late June the line was officially opened to the park on July 1st. In September construction was resumed and continued until it was completed on December 30, 1893. Regular passenger service between Columbia and Marietta occurred a few days afterward on January 1, 1894.

It was on this line, while under the ownership of the Pennsylvania Traction Company, that the most devastating trolley accident in Lancaster County's history occurred. On August 9, 1896 car No. 61 arriving late at Chickies Park, from Marietta, loaded passengers bound for Columbia. The car, grossly overladen with passengers, departed from the park for Columbia. Attempting to stop at the station in Klimesville the car slid past the depot. After backing up, two passengers were discharged in Klimesville after which the car resumed its journey to Columbia. While descending a hill on the north side of Columbia the car's brakes failed to function properly and it jumped the tracks and slid over an embankment, killing six individuals and injuring sixty-eight others. The traction company was ultimately charged with negligence for failure to comply with safety standards.²⁰

Shortly after acquiring the traction system of Lancaster County the Pennsylvania Traction Company began an extension of its lines to

Lititz. Built by the Lancaster and Lititz Electric Railway Company, chartered April 4, 1894, the line was leased to the Pennsylvania Traction Company for 999 years. Inauguration of service on the route occurred on April 30, 1895 as far as Kissel Hill and reached Lititz a week later. However the traction company was involved in a dispute with the P.R.R. over the right of the electric street railway company to lay their tracks on the bridge spanning the railroad's tracks on the Lititz Pike. Because of this disagreement patrons of the company were conveyed



C.T.C. #4 (originally West-End St. Railway #30) Brill Car, built 1892, at N. Prince St. carbarn. Courtesy of L.P. Cummings

from Centre Square to Duke and New Streets where they boarded an omnibus for the trip to the north side of the bridge and again boarded an electric car for the trip to Lititz. Unable to come to terms with the railroad the Lititz cars were routed out New Holland Avenue via Rossmere to the Lititz Pike thence to Lititz. This route was in effect until November 4, 1907 when the bridge route was used for the first time. ²¹

When the Pennsylvania Traction Company was formed the company had plans for constructing an electric street railway system that would operate between Harrisburg and Philadelphia with Lancaster as the center of this huge network. Estimated cost of constructing this scheme was between 4 and 5 million dollars. However unable to meet financial commitments incurred on two bonds, made in January and April 1894 for \$2,000,000 and \$2,500,000 respectively, the Pennsylvania Traction Company was forced into bankruptcy. A bill of

equity was filed by the Provident Life and Trust Company of Philadelphia against the traction company in 1896 but was not enforced until July 13, 1899 when the United States Courts ordered the electric street railway system to be sold.²² Thus on November 15, 1899 the Conestoga Traction Company became the new owner of Lancaster's public transportation system.

THE CITY LINES

Shortly after the Lancaster and Millersville Passenger Railway Company began horsecar operations in November 1874, the need for similar service to the various sections of Lancaster became apparent. However it wasn't until approximately ten years later that the first horsecar company began operating in the city, Managing Lancaster's first street railway company were: Bernard J. McGrann, President; Jacob B. Long, Secretary; and John T. MacGonigle, Treasurer.²³

Chartered on November 28, 1883 the Lancaster City Street Railway Company began construction of their urban lines in 1884. Rails were laid from McGrann's Park along New Holland Ave., to East Walnut Street, and thence to North Duke Street, south on Duke to East King Street thence to Centre Square. Originating their horsecar service on June 9, 1884 the company had an unfortunate beginning when one of its passengers sued them for failing to transport him to his destination.

During 1888 two new horsecar companies initiated operations in the city. Serving the western section of the city and West End Park (Maple Grove) was the West End Street Railway Company whereas The East End Street Railway Company operated on East King Street to Broad and also ran a cable car between Broad Street and the Conestoga River.²⁴

Use of electric cars on Lancaster's traction system was first contemplated in December 1889. As a prerequisite to this proposal it was advisable to consolidate the Lancaster City Street Railway and The East End Street Railway companies. Consummation of this merger occurred on January 8, 1890.²⁵

Builder of Lancaster's first electric street railway system was Summer T. Dunham who was renowned for building similar systems in the United States. Mr. Dunham who along with a syndicate of New York financiers purchased 60 per cent of the stock in the new traction company.

Elected as directors of the electric street railway company were Dr. M. L. Herr, John A. Coyle, John Baumgardner, Walter M. Franklin and Jacob B. Long, of Lancaster, and J. E. Ackley, Summer T. Dunham, Knight Neftel and John Thompson of New York. Elected to serve as officers of the corporation were John A. Coyle, President; M. L. Herr, Vice President; J. E. Ackley, Secretary and John H. Baumgardner, Treasurer.

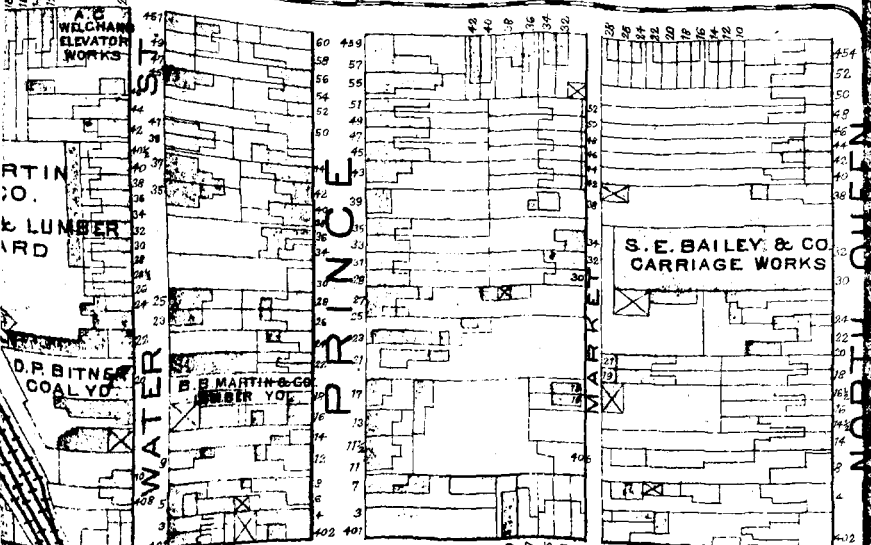
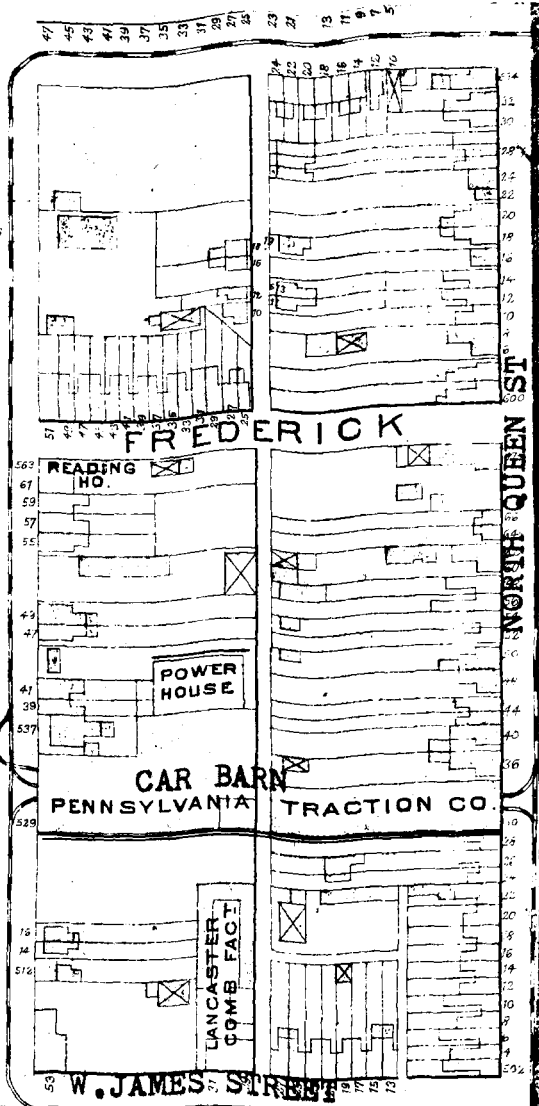
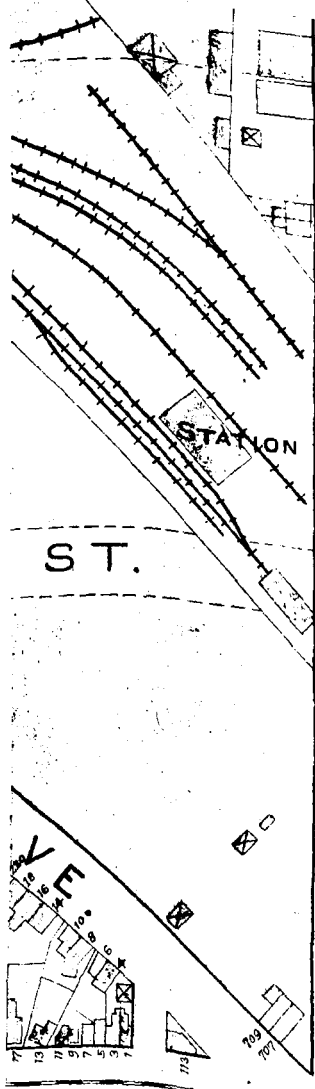
During the last week in March of the same year the new company began extending and converting their lines to electricity. The Lancaster Street Railway, as the new company was known, conducted a test of their electric system on May 21, 1890. A huge crowd gathered at the intersection of North Duke and East King Street to witness the first electric car to operate on the streets of Lancaster. The car operated by motorman Jacob Mellinger and conductor Thomas McManus traversed the distance between the aforementioned point and the reservoir east of the prison in record time. Satisfied with the performance of the electric car the company continued to electify their lines.²⁶ With the exception of the Millersville and West End Street Railway companies all the lines in the city were converted from horsepower to electricity on September 26, 1890.

On January 7, 1891 the Lancaster Street Railway Company purchased the West End Street Railway and the Millersville Street Railway companies, taking possession of the former company immediately and the Millersville line on May 1st. Purchase price of the two lines was \$11,000 and \$72,000 respectively.²⁷ The two lines while controlled by the Lancaster Street Railway Company were consolidated under the name of the West End Passenger Railway Company. When the traction company became the owner of the Millersville line on May 1st it immediately began electrifying and changing the gauge of the road to correspond to the city lines. During the last week of June the traction company inaugurated service to the western section of the city and to Millersville on July 1st.

When the Lancaster Street Railway Company initially electrified their lines they utilized the Daft double trolley system. However because of the poor performance exhibited by this method of supplying electric current to their street railway cars the company made the transition to the single wire trolley system when they electrified the Millersville and West end lines.²⁸

MERGER AND EXPANSION

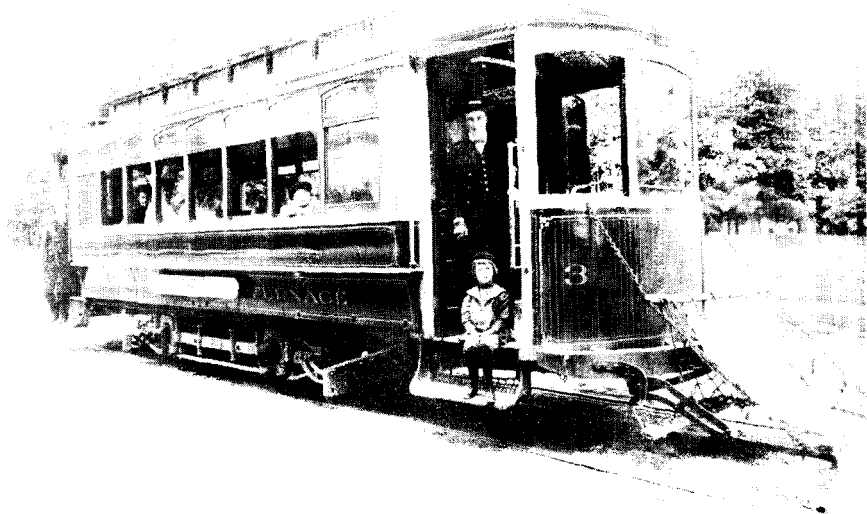
During January 1901 the Conestoga Traction Company, which had recently opened new lines to Ephrata and New Holland, had a route structure of eighty-six miles and plans to extend their lines to Manheim and Strasburg. In an effort to facilitate these projected expansions of the electric street railway system, the Conestoga Traction Company merged with the Edison Electric Illuminating Company and the Lancaster Gas Light and Fuel Company on January 26, 1901. Organized to regulate and manage the above mentioned companies, the Lancaster County Railway and Light Company had a property value of five and one-half million dollars, the largest financial transaction up to that time that had ever taken place in Lancaster County. President of the new corporation was William B. Given who, along with Samuel R.



Shipley of Philadelphia and P. B. Shaw of Williamsport, held controlling interest in the new company.²⁹

After completion of the Manheim and Strasburg routes in 1901, the Conestoga Traction Company turned its attention to providing the extreme northeastern section of the county with the benefits of a rapid transit line. Using the terminus of the Ephrata line in Ephrata as a starting point, the company contemplated extension of the route to Adamstown on the edge of Berks County. Chartered on June 19, 1901,³⁰ the Ephrata and Adamstown Railway Company was to construct a route in concurrence with a line being built by the traction company in Reading. Adamstown was the terminus point of both companies, thereby providing a continuous rail link between Lancaster and Reading. The Ephrata and Adamstown Railway Company began construction of the line on July 9, 1902 at a point near Ephrata. Leased annually to the Conestoga Traction Company for six percent of the actual cost of the road the first car operated from Lancaster to Adamstown on May 9, 1903. However the final link between the two traction companies did not occur until May 10, 1905.³¹

During the formative years of public transportation most electric street railway companies either owned or leased amusement parks to help generate business on their various routes. Lancaster's traction company managed Conestoga Park, located south of Witmer Bridge



Lancaster and York Furnace #3, Brill Car used on College Ave. by C.T.C. Courtesy of L.P. Cummings

along, the west side of the Conestoga River, until August 1902. The park had been badly damaged by an electrical storm that struck Lancaster County on July 25, 1902 and the company decided to close the park permanently. The following year the traction company initiated construction of the Seventh Ward and Rocky Springs Park routes, with inauguration of service on May 18th and May 24, 1903 respectively.³²

Also inaugurating service during 1903 was an independent traction company, chartered July 22, 1901, known as the Lancaster and York Furnace Railway Company. The route was officially opened on December 26, 1903 when a group of professional and business men from Lancaster City and County made the journey, in two electric cars, to Pequea. From its terminus, in Millersville where it connected with the Conestoga Traction Company, the line ran southward skirting the villages of Marticville and Conestoga Centre, thence following the Pequea Creek to its terminal point at Pequea.³³ Never destined to be a financial success, the company ceased operations in 1930.

LANCASTER COUNTY RAILWAY AND LIGHT COMPANY

Incorporated in January, 1901 under the laws of New Jersey, the Lancaster County Railway and Light Company was organized exclusively for the purpose of owning the capital stock of the various companies under its control, namely, the Conestoga Traction Company, Edison Electric Illuminating Company, Lancaster Gas Light and Fuel Company and the Columbia Electric Light and Power Company. Prior to 1903 the company failed to realize any financial gains on their investment, but in the aforementioned year the company had a profit of \$6,409.09 and henceforth its financial position continued to improve. During the years 1904 and 1905 the company had financial gains of \$81,258.68 and \$100,311.63 respectively.³⁴

The New Holland line, originally opened in January 1901 was eventually extended to the towns of Blue Ball and Terre Hill. Both of the extensions were constructed by the New Holland, Blue Ball and Terre Hill Street Railway Company, chartered June 24, 1903, which was regulated by the Conestoga Traction Company. Opened to Blue Ball on July 21, 1904, the company continued to extend the route to Terre Hill and the first day of rapid transit service to that borough commenced on September 23, 1905.³⁵

Regular passenger service on the Lancaster and Mt. Joy electric street railway line was inaugurated on October 8, 1905, when the route was opened to Rohrerstown.³⁶ After the completion of the bridge spanning the railroad tracks in Rohrerstown, service was expanded to Landisville on November 12, 1905.³⁷

A few days after Christmas, 1905, the builders of the line, the Lancaster, Rohrerstown and Mt. Joy Railway Company, which was chartered on August 16, 1904, requested the Borough Council of Mt. Joy to allow the company to deviate from the planned route through the town. The original scheme was to have the electric street railway cars operate through the borough on Main Street, but because of the extra expense involved in changing the electric lights on Main Street, the railway company desired to have the route changed to Donegal Street.³⁸

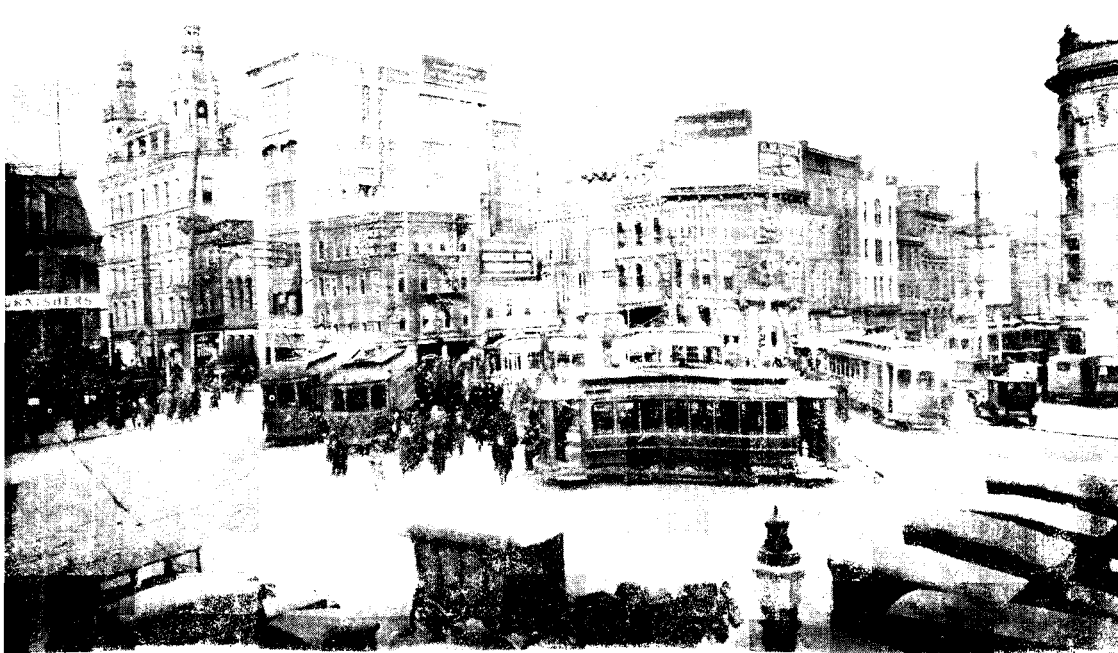
On February 3, 1906, approximately four weeks after receiving authorization to deviate from the original plan, the Conestoga Traction Company initiated rapid transit service to the borough of Mt. Joy.³⁹

While the Mt. Joy line was being constructed, the Elizabethtown and Florin Street Railway Company, chartered June 20, 1902,⁴⁰ was organized to extend the Mt. Joy line to Elizabethtown. Traversing the six miles between Florin and Elizabethtown, the line ran parallel to the Harrisburg Turnpike.⁴¹ Regular passenger service between Lancaster and Elizabethtown was initiated on September 5, 1908.⁴²

Exactly one week after the Mt. Joy line was opened, the Conestoga Traction Company began regular passenger service to Quarryville. Extending from the Strasburg route, the electric street railway company operated through the villages of Refton, New Providence and Camargo, thence to Quarryville.

The Lancaster and Quarryville Railway Company, chartered December 31, 1903, while constructing the roadbed of the traction line near the village of Camargo, became embroiled in a dispute with the Pennsylvania Railroad concerning a piece of ground previously owned by the railroad. After the street railway company finished laying their rails over the ground in question, employees of the Pennsylvania Railroad tore up the rails. The next day, August 12, 1905, the street railway company applied for an injunction to prevent the railroad from interfering with the construction of the line.⁴³ Finally, on November 28, 1905, the court ruled in favor of the street railway company and two days later the line was opened to New Providence, and on February 10, 1906, to Quarryville.⁴⁴

The Coatesville line, the longest and last suburban route to be put into operation by the Conestoga Traction Company, began regular passenger service on July 7, 1906,⁴⁵ when the line was opened to Leaman Place. Built by the Lancaster and Eastern Street Railway Company, chartered September 24, 1903, the route was extended to Gap on July 21st. A car operated by motorman Abraham Kauffman and conductor Harry Nolt traversed the distance between Lancaster and Gap in approximately one hour and fifteen minutes. Included among the first passengers to travel over the route were the Superintendent of the Conestoga Traction Company, C. Edgar Titzel, W. U. Hensel, S. R. Slaymaker and J. F. McCoy, Esq.⁴⁶ On July 29, 1906, the route was extended to Christiana, its terminal point. With the addi-



Northeast view of Center Square in 1924. Darmstaetter photo, print by F.W. Schneider III Courtesy of L.P. Cummings

tions to their system made in 1906, the route structure of the Conestoga Traction Company totaled 146 miles.

In 1909 the Conestoga Traction Company leased the system of the Christiana and Coatesville Street Railway Company and expanded their passenger service to Coatesville on August 6, 1909.⁴⁷

THE SUSQUEHANNA RAILWAY LIGHT AND POWER COMPANY

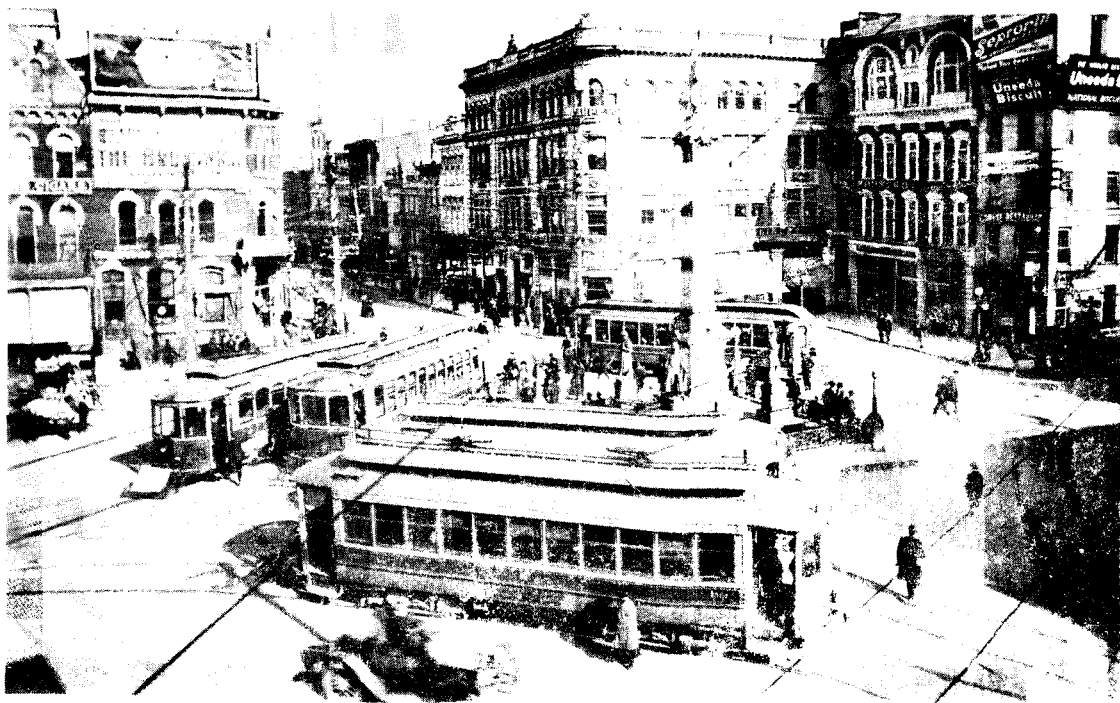
Organized specifically to acquire control of the Lancaster County Railway, Light, Heat and Power Company, the Susquehanna Railway, Light and Power Company, besides owning the electric street railway system and utility companies in Lancaster, controlled similar companies in several cities in the United States. Serving on the board of directors of the corporation, which had a paid-up capital of eight million dollars, were: W. W. Griest, P. Eckert Slaymaker, and P. B. Shaw.⁴⁸

The Susquehanna Company, in an effort to provide the community of Lancaster with the best service possible, moved its offices from the Woolworth Building into the new Conestoga Building, located at 7-17 East Orange Street, on July 15, 1910.⁴⁹

In 1931 when the Conestoga Transportation Company severed relations with the Edison Electric Light and the Lancaster Gas Light and Fuel companies, it obtained control of the entire building. After having their operations offices located in this structure for 42 years, the transportation company moved them to the car barn on East Chestnut Street on May 2, 1952. The building was demolished in the mid-1960's for downtown renewal and was replaced with the now-defunct Hess department store.

During 1910 the Conestoga Traction Company erected a new car barn and administration building on East Chestnut Street between Reservoir and Broad Streets. Measuring 150 by 500 feet, the building was capable of housing 100 trolley cars. Located on the first floor of the new structure were offices and storage space. Situated on the second floor of the building were pool tables, magazines, newspapers, lockers, washrooms and beds for employees who were sometimes required to work long hours during inclement weather. Cars began operating from the new car barn on July 15, 1910.⁵⁰

Prior to 1920 when the one-man Birney Safety Car was introduced to Lancaster, every electric car required a motorman and conductor for



Southeast view of Center Square in 1921. Darmstaetter photo. Courtesy of L.P. Cummings

its efficient operation. However, on October 5, 1920, the Conestoga Traction Company conducted a trial run on the Seventh Ward route for a group of newspapermen to demonstrate the many safety features of the car. The group was shown how the car would automatically stop when the operator removed his hand from the control lever. When this occurred the power was shut off, sand deposited on the tracks, brakes applied and the safety catch on the doors released so that they could be opened by simply pushing upon them.

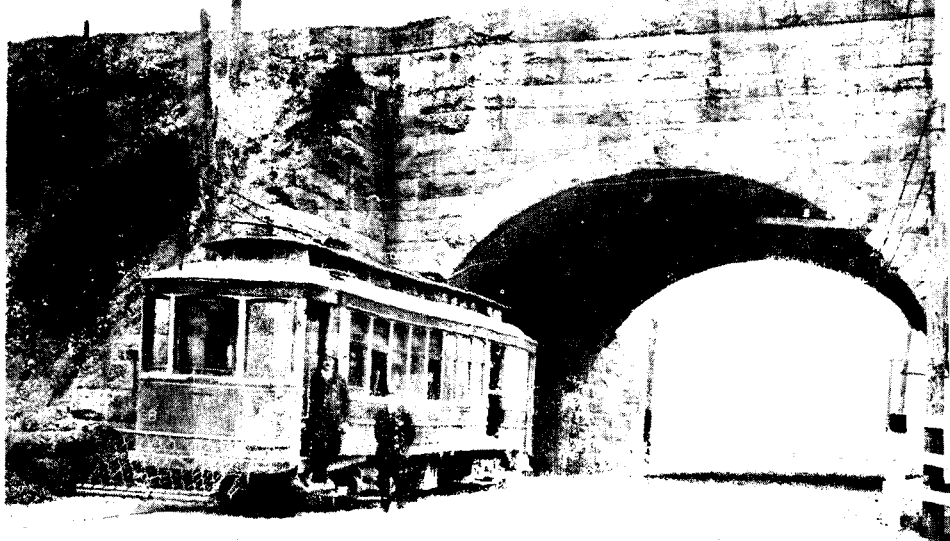
Another new feature of the car was an illuminated route sign readable at a distance of several hundred yards. In addition to requiring only one man for its operation the Safety Car also reduced the running time on the traction company's various routes. This was accomplished because the car was equipped with double doors, thus passengers could be loaded and unloaded simultaneously. First used on the East Belt line between the hours of midnight and six in the morning the Birney Safety Car was eventually placed in service on all of the company's city routes.⁵¹

During 1923 the Conestoga Traction Company constructed its last street railway route in the city. Built at a cost of \$100,000, the Sixth Ward Belt line was officially opened on June 29, 1923 when a special car laden with company officials and invited guests departed from Penn Square at 6:45 p.m. Opening of the line was in concurrence with an endeavor by the citizens of the Sixth Ward to raise funds to purchase ground for a recreation area for the benefit of the children living in the ward.

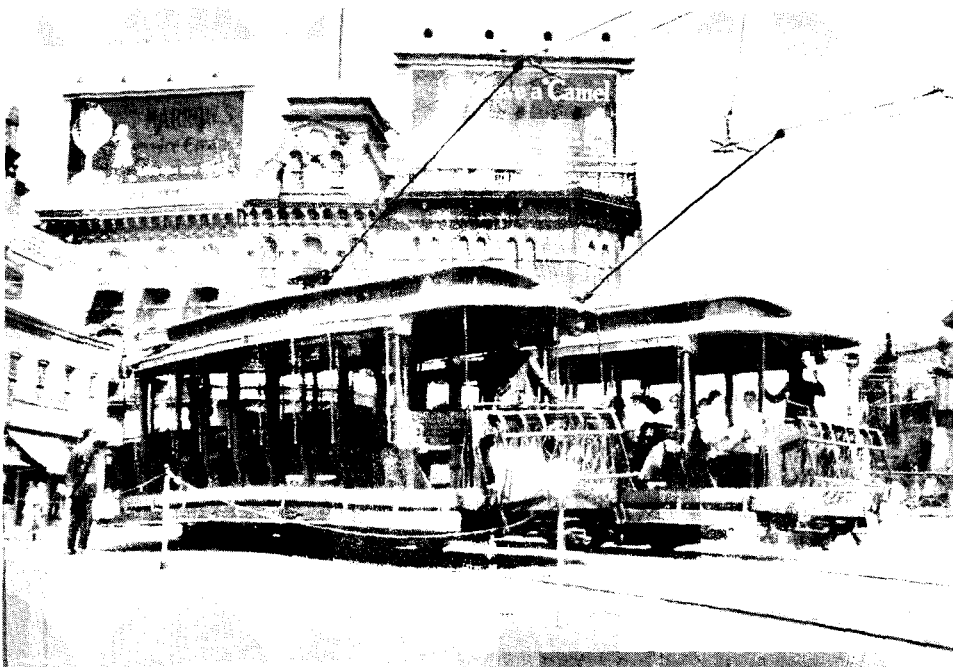
Company officials traversing the route aboard the special car were Congressman W. W. Griest, president; Ralph B. Hull, general manager and David R. Baker, master of transportation. Included among the invited guests were John C. Carter, president of the Fulton National Bank; John Hertzler, president of the Lancaster Trust Company; A. K. Hostetter, president of the Conestoga National Bank; city councilman A. B. Kauffman and representatives of the press.

After traversing the route to North Duke and New Streets the special car returned to the Fulton Market Hotel where Mayor Frank C. Musser and city councilman Isidore Rosenthal urged everyone to attend the festival being held at McGrann Park to raise funds for the new playground.⁵²

The following year the traction company rerouted the Ephrata line to provide service to the towns of Talmage, Akron and Brownstown. When the route was originally constructed in 1901, the residents of these communities protested against having the line pass through their villages, so the route was built several miles to the east of the towns. However, by 1924 the citizens of these towns desired the convenience of a rapid transit system serving their communities. Thus on April 17, 1924, service was inaugurated on the five mile modification of the Ephrata route.⁵³



C.T.C. #38 Combine Car at Rheems P.R.R. Underpass on Elizabethtown Line. Lower photo: East-North-East View of Centre Square with two open cars about 1920. Photos by F.W. Schneider III, courtesy of L.P. Cummings



Although the automobile was becoming an increasing threat to the traction company, they transported 19 million passengers on their city and suburban lines during 1924.

On April 1, 1925, the Conestoga Traction Company moved its waiting room and all of its offices, with the exception of the operations department, from the Conestoga Building on East Orange Street to the Griest Building. Built by the Conestoga Terminal Corporation on the site originally occupied by the Hirsh clothing store, the building was also the corporate headquarters of the Edison Electric Company and the Lancaster Gas Light and Fuel Company. Named for Congressman W. W. Griest, Lancaster's tallest building was dedicated on September 21, 1925.

Also during September 1925 the Conestoga Traction Company was operating 154 cars over a route structure of 165 miles and employed 615 employees, 280 of which were dispatchers, motormen and conductors.⁵⁵

Approximately 6 years later, in August 1931, the Conestoga Traction Company was on the verge of bankruptcy. In an effort to rectify this situation a plan was evolved whereby the Conestoga Traction Company and the eleven leased lines over which the company operated would be merged. It was also proposed at this time to replace several county trolley lines with buses following the reorganization of the company. The eleven leased lines involved in the merger were: Lancaster, Petersburg and Manheim Railway Company; Lancaster, Mechanicsburg and New Holland Railway Company; Lancaster, Willow Street, Lampeter and Strasburg Railway Company; Ephrata and Adamstown Railway Company; Lancaster and Rocky Springs Railway Company; New Holland, Blue Ball and Terre Hill Street Railway Company; Lancaster and Quarryville Street Railway Company; Rohrerstown, Landisville and Mount Joy Street Railway Company; Elizabethtown and Florin Street Railway Company; Christiana and Coatesville Street Railway Company; and Lancaster and Eastern Railway Company.⁵⁶ This was the second time that the Conestoga Traction Company merged with lines that they had formerly leased; the first merger occurred during March 1918. At that time the company was merged with: Lancaster City Street Railway Company; Lancaster and Lititz Electric Railway Company; Columbia and Ironville Street Railway Company; Columbia and Donegal Railway Company and the Lancaster Railway Company.⁵⁶

THE CONESTOGA TRANSPORTATION COMPANY

After receiving approval from the Public Service Commission in Harrisburg on November 24, 1931, to merge with the eleven street railway companies, the Conestoga Traction Company was reorganized as the Conestoga Transportation Company. Property of the eleven leased lines not essential to the operation of a transportation system such as transmission lines were sold to the Pennsylvania Power and

Light Company, successor to the Edison Electric Company. Chartered on December 4th and beginning its legal existence on December 14, 1931, the Conestoga Transportation Company moved its corporate headquarters from the Griest Building to the Conestoga Building on East Orange Street.

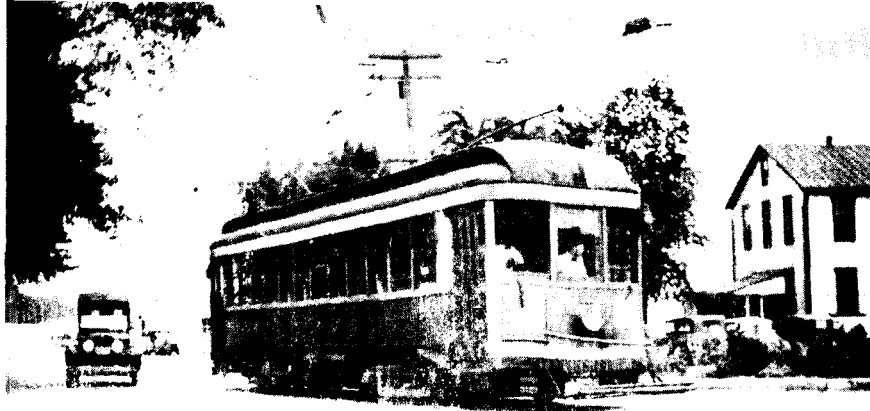
Elected as President of the Conestoga Transportation Company was Col. John H. Wickersham, who had served as chairman of the Stockholders Protective Committee during the reorganization of the company. Other officials of the new transportation company were: B. Frank Snavelly, first vice-president; Howard J. Eshelman, second vice-president; Ira H. Bare, secretary; and John K. Herr, treasurer. Capital of the company was \$548,732.

An austerity program was initiated by the new company whereby they would eliminate eight county trolley lines and substitute buses on only four of them. The other four lines which had been losing money for several years would be abolished.

Buses had been recommended to replace the trolleys on the county lines in an effort to speed up the transportation system to meet the competition of the automobile, which as early as 1924 had been an increasing threat upon the company's passenger business. Originator of this plan was renown street railway engineer Albert C. Ritchie of Boston who, along with several other eastern utility experts had been hired by the Conestoga Traction Company to study the local transit system.⁵⁷ In accordance with the new program employees of the Conestoga Transportation Company accepted a 10 percent reduction in wages to help the company during its financial crisis.

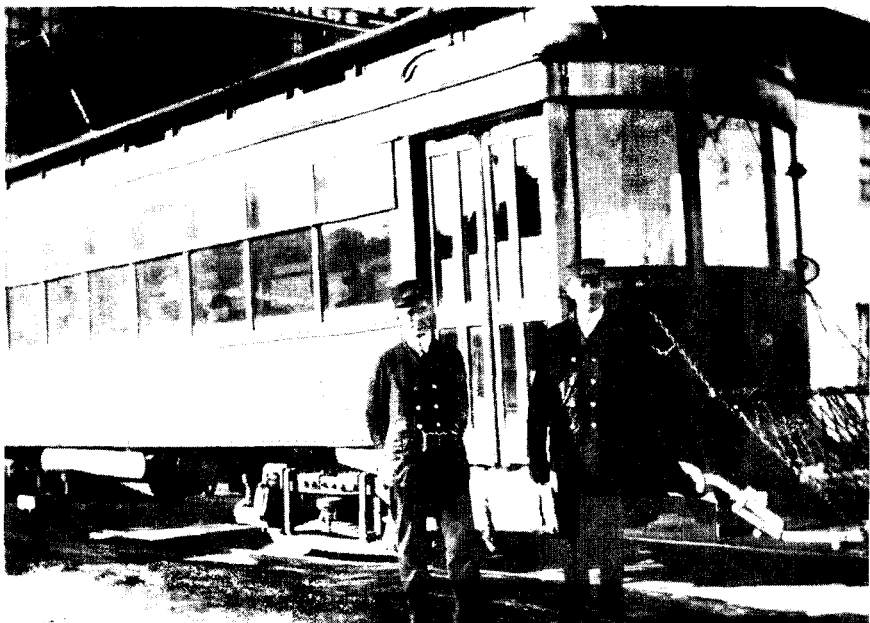
When the new management assumed control of the Conestoga Transportation system on December 14, 1931, Ralph B. Hull who had been general manager and vice-president of the Conestoga Traction Company since May 1913, severed connections with the transportation company to become vice-president of the Lancaster Division of the Pennsylvania Power and Light Company. Replacing Mr. Hull as general manager was David R. Baker who had been employed by the transit company for 30 years.⁵⁸

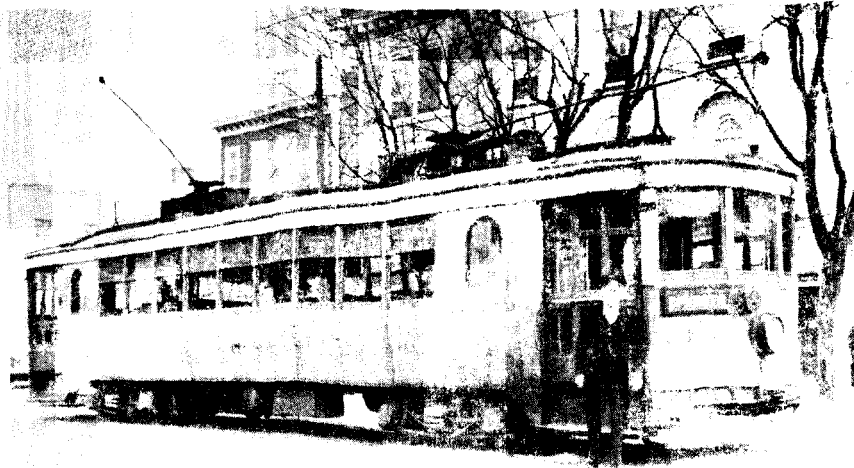
In preparation for utilizing buses in place of trolleys the transportation company began renovating their car barn on East Chestnut Street in the early weeks of 1932. All but one set of tracks leading into the eastern section of the building were removed and this portion was macadamized to be used as a driveway. Inside the barn the trolley pits were removed in the eastern half of the structure and the floor concreted. In addition gas tanks and pumps were installed to fuel the 10 21-passenger buses the company purchased to replace the trolleys operating on the Manheim, Quarryville, Strasburg and Elizabethtown routes. Besides petitioning the Public Service Commission to substitute buses on the above mentioned routes the Conestoga Transportation Company also asked permission to abolish service between



C.T.C. #59 Brill DT-RR interurban car. Built 1916, on Lititz run in 1933. Stephen D. Maguire photo. Courtesy of L.P. Cummings

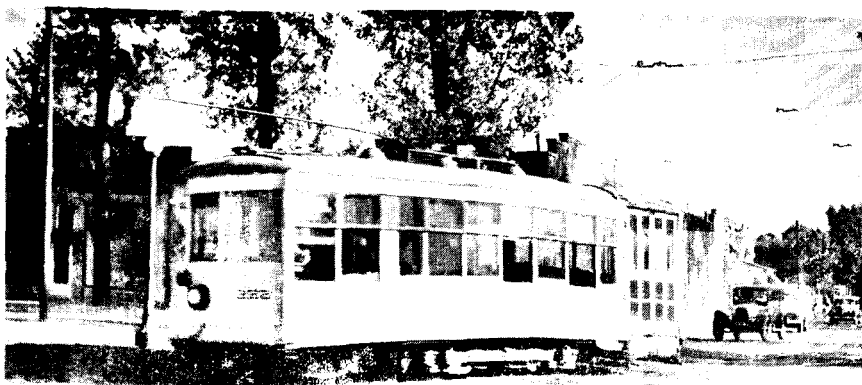
Conductor Martin Campbell, left, and Motorman Edward Druckenbroad on the College Ave. Trolley, about 1930. Courtesy of Mrs. Janet Druckenbroad





C.T.C. #69 Cincinnati Car Co. Suburban car, purchased 1924, on Ephrata run in 1944
 Courtesy of L.P. Cummings

C.T.C. #222 Birney-type Brill Car approaching P.R.R. Station at McGovern Ave. in
 1939. C.L. Seibert, Jr. Photo. Courtesy of L.P. Cummings



Blue Ball and Terre Hill, Ephrata and Adamstown, Columbia and Marietta and a portion of the belt line in Columbia.⁵⁹

Early in March 1932 Lancaster County was struck by a late winter snow storm which severely damaged the section of trolley line between Mt. Joy and Elizabethtown. Using buses on this portion of the Lancaster and Elizabethtown route the company in the belief that the Public Service Commission would soon approve their petition to operate buses over the entire route refrained from making repairs on the line.⁶⁰

Permission to discontinue service on the eight trolley lines and replace buses on four of them was granted by the Public Service Commission on April 5, 1932.⁶¹ A few days later on April 10th bus service was initiated on the Manheim and Elizabethtown routes. The following day, April 11, buses began operating on the Quarryville and Strasburg lines.⁶²

Trolley service on the four lines to be abandoned was terminated between Blue Ball and Terre Hill and Ephrata and Adamstown on April 24, 1932.⁶³ Termination of service on a portion of the Columbia Belt line and between Columbia and Marietta occurred on April 25, 1932.⁶⁴

On August 20, 1932, the Conestoga Transportation Company in a further effort to streamline their transportation system, eliminated the Ann Street Belt line and ceased operations to Coatesville. The line shortened to Gap on this date was curtailed to Leaman Place on August 19, 1933, and finally was replaced by buses on January 6, 1935.⁶⁵

The South Queen Street line was motorized on August 13, 1933. Beginning service on September 26, 1890, in combination with the Duke Street route in the early years of its existence, it was one of the best revenue routes on the transportation company's system. Leaving Centre Square at 12:09 a.m. on the above date, motorman Fred Kopp piloted the last electric street railway car to traverse the route. Less than eight hours later, at 7:45 a.m., buses were placed on the route.⁶⁶

Even the archaic Millersville line, the oldest on the transit company's system, was unable to survive the transition from trolleys to motor buses. When the last Millersville car departed from Penn Square after making its run over the Millersville route on October 18, 1933, it marked an end to an era which had begun in 1874.⁶⁷

During February 1938 three more trolley lines were displaced by buses. Ten new buses had been purchased at a cost of \$116,000 to replace trolleys on the Columbia, Lititz and Marietta Avenue routes.

February 14 marked the last day of trolley service on the Columbia route. Veteran motorman George Erwin who had served on the Columbia line for forty years, was accorded the honor of operating the last car over the route. Starting his career in 1897 on the city lines, Erwin switched to the Columbia route in 1898 where he remained until shortly before the demise of the Columbia trolley line when he was transferred to the company's administration building.⁶⁸

A week later the Lititz and Marietta Avenue electric street railway cars were supplanted by motor buses. Reminiscent of the Columbia trolley, the last car to travel over the Lititz route departed from Centre Square at 11:15 p.m. on February 21, 1938.⁶⁹

Shortly after midnight on June 25, 1939, the College Avenue and West Belt electric cars departed from Penn Square known earlier as Centre Square to traverse their respective routes for the final time. Among the 23 passengers to take the farewell trip on the College Avenue route were five members of the Lancaster Railway Historical Society.

The West Belt line was fated to pass into oblivion when both routes were combined into the College Avenue route. Beginning service on June 21, 1891, the route was among one of the original lines to be constructed and electrified when the Lancaster Street Railway Company made the transition from horsepower to electricity.⁷⁰

On April 13 and October 19, 1941 the Seventh Ward and East Belt lines were supplanted with buses. The following year the Laurel and Filbert trolley line which began operating in May 1893, was replaced with motor buses on January 25, 1942. However these replacements were only temporary. All of the above-mentioned routes reverted to the utilization of trolleys by mid-1943 because of the gasoline shortage during World War II.⁷¹

Approximately two years after the end of World War II, the Conestoga Transportation Company completed its plan to motorize its entire transit system. By January 27, 1947, nineteen of the 26 new buses on order had been received and February 10th was set as the probable termination date of all but the Seventh Ward and Rocky Springs trolley lines. Also on February 10th all transit stops were to be removed from Penn Square to the first blocks of the several throughfares radiating from the square.⁷²

Because of a snow storm which struck Lancaster in early February buses displaced the trolleys on the Laurel Street line on February 5, five days before the anticipated date. On February 9, 1947, trolleys operating on the Duke Street, Sixth Ward, Ephrata, New Holland and East Belt lines traversed their respective routes for the last time and passed into oblivion.⁷³

After the demise of the above mentioned trolley routes, four veteran motormen preferred retirement to making the transition from electric cars to buses. Retiring on February 10, 1947 were Alonzo Donohue, seventy-three, Lorenzo D. Douglas, seventy-seven, Warren E. Evans, seventy-five, and J. Frank Rineer, seventy-six. Donohue, retiring after 52 years service, began working for the Pennsylvania Traction Company in 1895. After working in the company's trolley repair shop for four years he transferred to the electric cars as a motorman in 1899.

Douglas, with 40 years service, began as a conductor in 1907 on the West Belt line and later transferred to the Elizabethtown run where he

remained for 21 years. He also served at various times during his career as conductor or motorman on the Coatesville, Terre Hill, Strasburg, Millersville and city lines.

Evans, who helped to lay tracks during the construction of the Coatesville route, began working for the Conestoga Traction Company on June 1, 1907. Although he served most of his 40 years with the company on the Adamstown and Ephrata routes, Evans began his career as a motorman on the city lines.



J. Frank Rineer, motorman on the Duke Street trolley, began working for the local traction company on July 7, 1920. Youngest man in terms of service, Rineer began his 27 years service with the transit company as a conductor. Serving in that capacity on the Elizabethtown, Columbia, Millersville, Quarryville and Strasburg routes before transferring to the city lines as a motorman.⁷⁴

Trolley operations in Lancaster were terminated entirely on September 21, 1947 when the Rocky Springs and Seventh Ward routes were replaced by buses on this date.⁷⁵

Perhaps it was an appropriate tribute that the last trolley cars to operate in Lancaster should begin their final journeys over their respective routes from the same intersection (East King and Duke Streets) where this form of transportation was first introduced to the citizens of Lancaster on May 21, 1890.

NOTES

1. *THE DAILY NEW ERA* - January 16, 1900
2. *Ibid.*, December 12, 1899
3. CTC Employee Magazine *THE WHEEL* - July 1947
4. *Ibid.*, August 1947
5. *THE DAILY NEW ERA* - December 18, 1901
6. *THE MILLERSVILLE TROLLEY* BY John D. Denney Jr.
7. CHARTER BOOK 1
8. DEED BOOK H VOLUME 17 PAGE 351
9. *THE DAILY NEW ERA* - March 8, 1893
10. *Ibid.*, May 5, 1893
11. DEED BOOK S VOLUME 17 PAGE 212
12. *THE DAILY NEW ERA* - May 10, 1893
13. CHARTER BOOK 2 PAGE 98
14. CTC Employee Magazine *THE WHEEL* - April 1947
15. *THE DAILY NEW ERA* - August 26, 1893
16. *Ibid.*, February 6, 1894
17. *Ibid.*, February 7, 1894
18. CHARTER BOOK 4 PAGE 156
19. *THE DAILY NEW ERA* - December 22, 1892
20. *TROLLEY LINES of COLUMBIA* BY John D. Denney Jr.
21. CTC Employee Magazine *THE WHEEL* May 1947
22. *THE LANCASTER INTELLIGENCER* - July 14, 1899
23. *LANCASTER CITY DIRECTORY* 1884
24. CTC Employee Magazine *THE WHEEL* January 1947
25. *THE DAILY NEW ERA* - September 26, 1890
26. *Ibid.*, May 22, 1890
27. *Ibid.*, January 8, 1891
28. *Ibid.*, June 22, 1891
29. *NEW ERA SEMI-WEEKLY* - January 26, 1901
30. CHARTER BOOK 2 PAGE 205
31. *TROLLEYS of the PA. DUTCH COUNTRY* BY John D. Denney Jr.
32. *THE DAILY NEW ERA* - May 25, 1903
33. *THE LANCASTER INTELLIGENCER* - December 30, 1903
34. *THE DAILY NEW ERA* - August 1, 1905

35. CTC Employee Magazine *THE WHEEL* July 1947
36. *THE LANCASTER INTELLIGENCER* - October 7, 1905
37. *THE DAILY NEW ERA* November 11, 1905
38. *Ibid.*, December 29, 1905
39. *Ibid.*, February 3, 1906
40. CHARTER BOOK 2 PAGE 465
41. *THE DAILY NEW ERA* - July 26, 1905
42. *Ibid.*, September 5, 1908
43. *Ibid.*, August 12, 1905
44. *Ibid.*, February 9, 1906
45. *Ibid.*, July 9, 1906
46. *Ibid.*, July 21, 1906
47. *Ibid.*, August 5, 1901
48. *INTELLIGENCER JOURNAL* - April 16, 1910
49. *THE DAILY NEW ERA* - July 16, 1910
50. FILES of the CONESTOGA TRANSPORTATION COMPANY
51. *LANCASTER EXAMINER & DAILY NEW ERA* - October 5, 1920
52. *LANCASTER NEW ERA & EXAMINER* - June 30, 1923
53. *INTELLIGENCER JOURNAL* - April 16, 1924
54. *LANCASTER NEW ERA* - September 21, 1925
55. *SUNDAY NEWS* - August 23, 1931
56. *THE DAILY NEW ERA* - March 15, 1918
57. *LANCASTER NEW ERA* - December 10, 1931
58. *Ibid.*, December 11, 1931
59. *SUNDAY NEWS* - February 21, 1932
60. *INTELLIGENCER JOURNAL* - March 12, 1932
61. *Ibid.*, April 6, 1932
62. *Ibid.*, April 11, 1932
63. *Ibid.*, April 20, 1932
64. *Ibid.*, April 25, 1932
65. *SUNDAY NEWS* - January 13, 1935
66. *Ibid.*, August 13, 1933
67. *LANCASTER NEW ERA* - October 18, 1933
68. *INTELLIGENCER JOURNAL* - February 15, 1938
69. *Ibid.*, February 22, 1938
70. *SUNDAY NEWS* - June 25, 1939
71. FILES of the CONESTOGA TRANSPORTATION COMPANY
72. *LANCASTER NEW ERA* - January 27, 1947
73. *Ibid.*, February 7, 1947
74. *Ibid.*, February 6, 1947
75. *SUNDAY NEWS* - September 21, 1947

ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTOR

Richard D. Shindle was born in Lancaster, Pennsylvania in 1933, a son of Elizabeth Burns Shindle and the late Howard W. Shindle. He attended the public schools of Lancaster and is a 1952 graduate of McCaskey High School. Mr. Shindle has been a member of the Lancaster County Historical Society for six years. His interest in history also led to the completion of a Shindle Family genealogy, a copy of which is in the library of the Society.

Mr. Shindle is employed in the Mechanical Department of Armstrong Cork Company and resides with his family in Lancaster.