

COLORFUL TRANSPORTATION EPIC

Electric Street Cars Operated Here For 41 Years

Used Gas Engine, Generators; System Most Unique in State

(Lancaster Eagle-Gazette, June 4, 1950) Lancaster wrote finis in the fall of 1937 to one of the most colorful chapters in its transportation history when the electric street cars passed into the limbo.

In their stead come the motor buses which the Lancaster Transit, Inc. started with five, today has eight operating over three routes, East Main-West side; North Columbus-East Sixth and the suburban districts.

Pass of the trolley cars or “yellow perils” on October 30, 1937 marked the end of the transportation era extending over 41 years in Lancaster. Electric service started here July 3, 1896.

H.B. Peters was first and only president of the Lancaster Traction Co. which had among its shareholders, George Matt, of Lancaster Electric Light Co. which furnished the city domestic electricity; Andrew Bauman, wholesale and retail grocery and baker, and original promoter of the horse drawn street cars, and Robert E. Sheldon and E.K. Stewart, connected with the Columbus Railway Co.

The “last roundup” in October, 1937 brought thousands to the downtown section to view the line of 16 cars start the last run to the barns.

The Fairfield Traction Co. of Lancaster was organized January 1, 1900, and operated a passenger and freight line from the city to the state Boys’ Industrial School, five miles south. The first operations of this line were powered by a small steam engine nicknamed locally the “Dinkey.”

This “Dinky”, an experiment developed by the Baldwin Locomotive Works at Philadelphia, operated more or less successfully a few years.

Just before the Fairfield Traction Co. was consolidated in January, 1907 with the Lancaster Traction Co. into a new firm known as the Lancaster Traction and Power Co. the line to the B.I.S. was electrified.

Those interested in the Fairfield Traction Co. at the time of its inception included H.B. Peters, president; Frank C. Neeb, Lancaster sandstone quarry operator; James N. Duffy, New York leather manufacturer; George P. Rising; William Davidson, Lancaster attorney; Robert Sheldon, E.K. Stewart and M.S. Hopkins, all of the Columbus Railway Co.

In January, 1907 the new Lancaster Traction & Power began with H.B. Peters, president; Phil R. Peters, secretary-treasurer and Frank Ginn, superintendent.

There were, from time to time, different persons owning minor interests in the Lancaster Traction & Power Co., but throughout the period of the company's life, and since its incorporation, November 13, 1906, the control and management of the property was in the hands of the late H.B. Peters, prominent Lancaster banker. J.R. Smith, served as superintendent for 29 years, and is superintendent of the Lancaster Transit, Inc. lines today.

West Side Extension 1906

The electric line was extended to the West Side in 1906, first to Washington Ave, later extended to Fair Ave. When electric service started in 1896, there were three cars, then shortly another was added. Routes were the Columbus and Main St. and the Broad St. to Fair Ave., and Columbus St.

In 1904 the line was extended to Cherry St. on East Main St. (the Last Chance Saloon). At one time later 16 cars were being operated, including the line to B.I.S.

In 1915 an extension was made on East Sixth Ave. to Madison Ave. to Fair Ave. then on Fair Ave. to Broad St. past the Fairgrounds.

Before the original Lancaster Traction Co. line was organized a horse-drawn street car system functioned on East Main St. as far as Cherry St. and on North Columbus St. as far as Forest Rose cemetery.

Among the organizers of the old horse car line were Andrew Bauman, Dr. G. Miesse and Charles Nester. Barrett and Earnshaw, real estate developers here in 1890, were also connected with the old horse cars.

The first practical 100 horsepower natural gas engine manufactured in the U. S. was bought in 1896 and used successfully until 1904. This first engine took explosion on both ends of a single cylinder like a steam engine. In 1904 a new 150 horsepower 20-ton Miller improved natural gas engine built in Springfield, O., and patented in 1897, was purchased.

It was belted to two generators, patented in 1880 by the Thompson-Houston Electrical Co., Lynn, Mass., and operated steadily until 1912 and thereafter as required. It was used frequently when a power "boost" was needed particularly when the BIS line was operating, and also in the winter of 1935-36.

Weighed Seven Tons

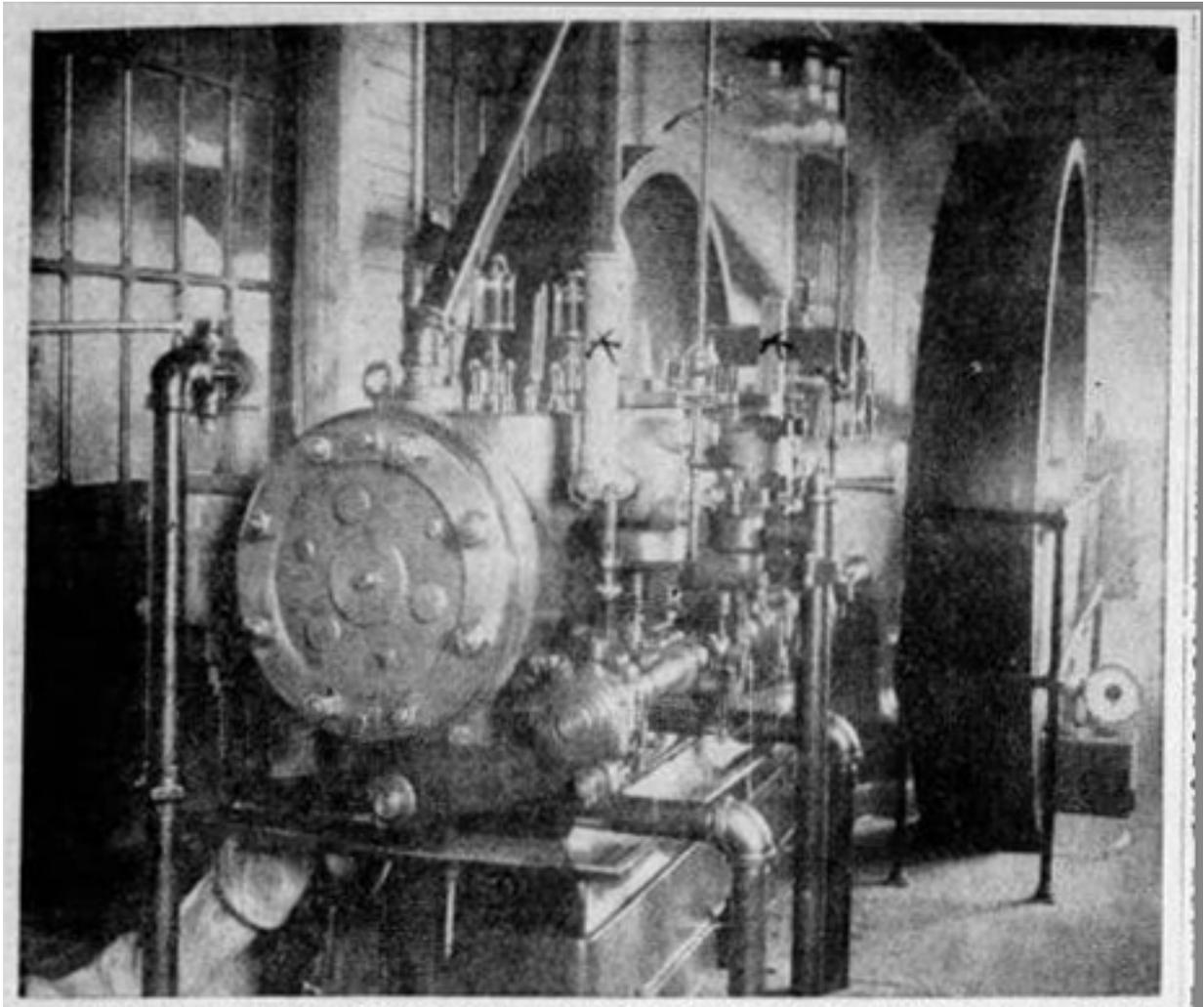
The 1904 gasoline engine and the two generators, each weighing seven tons, is being preserved for posterity at the Ford-Edison Museum in Dearborn, Mich., where they are displayed as early devices of power for mass transportation, machinery used in production and distribution of electricity.

The equipment was removed from the Fair Ave. barns here to Dearborn in the fall of 1937.

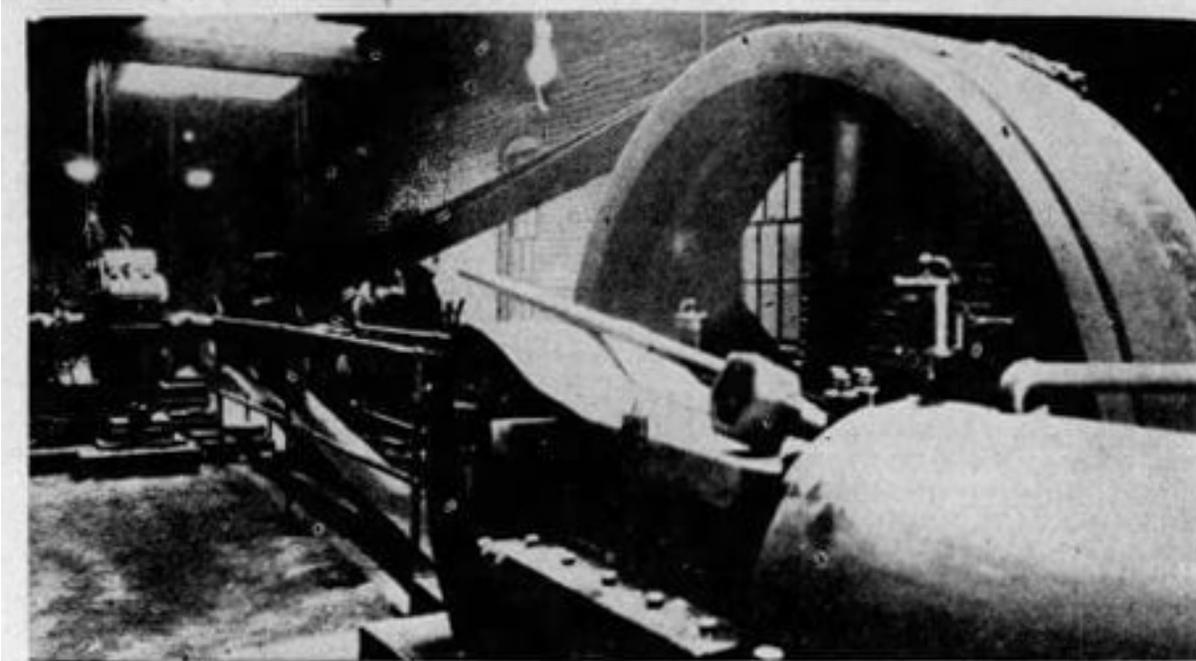
Interesting are the types of charges made by the Traction Co. here for rides. From 1896 to 1924 the company sold 33 tickets (celluloid checks) for \$1, or six for 25 cents. These red checks have been replaced today by bronze tokens used on the buses.

From 1924 to 1937, 25 red checks were sold for \$1 or six for 25 cents, (yellow checks). Green celluloid discs were sold by the company to newsboys to ride cars while distributing papers, 50 for \$1.

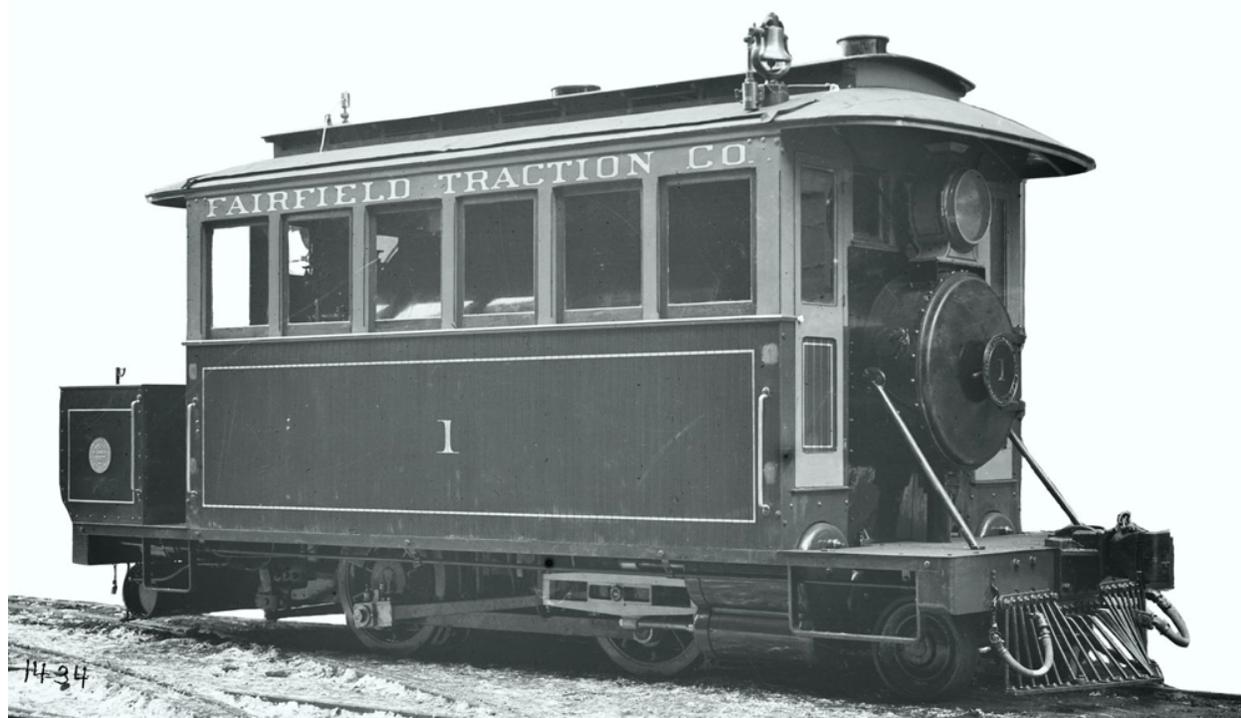
The modern Transit, Inc., Lancaster buses, built by General Motors, have 21-passenger capacity. Fares are now 10 cents straight or three tokens for 25 cents, (8 ½ cents).



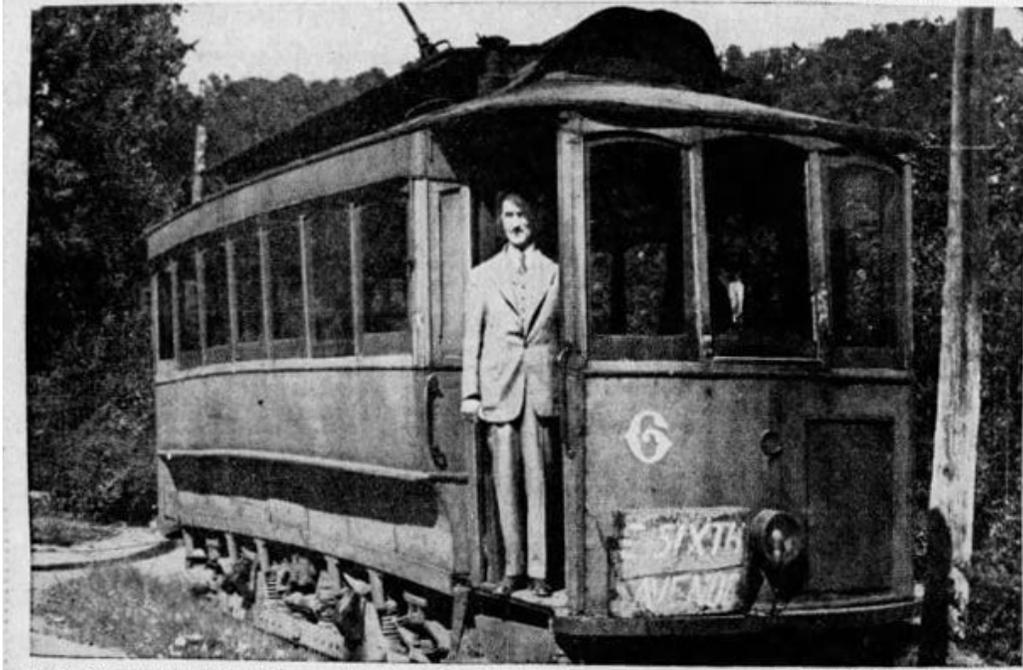
FIRST SOURCE OF POWER – 100 hp gas engine belted to 75 kw Thompson-Houston, 500-volt DC generator, built in 1896 (x-hot tubes for ignition). Double acting engine, power on both sides [of the] piston. Took explosion on both ends of single cylinder like a steam engine. Three Lancaster Street cars operated by this plant from the Fair Ave. barns where picture was taken.



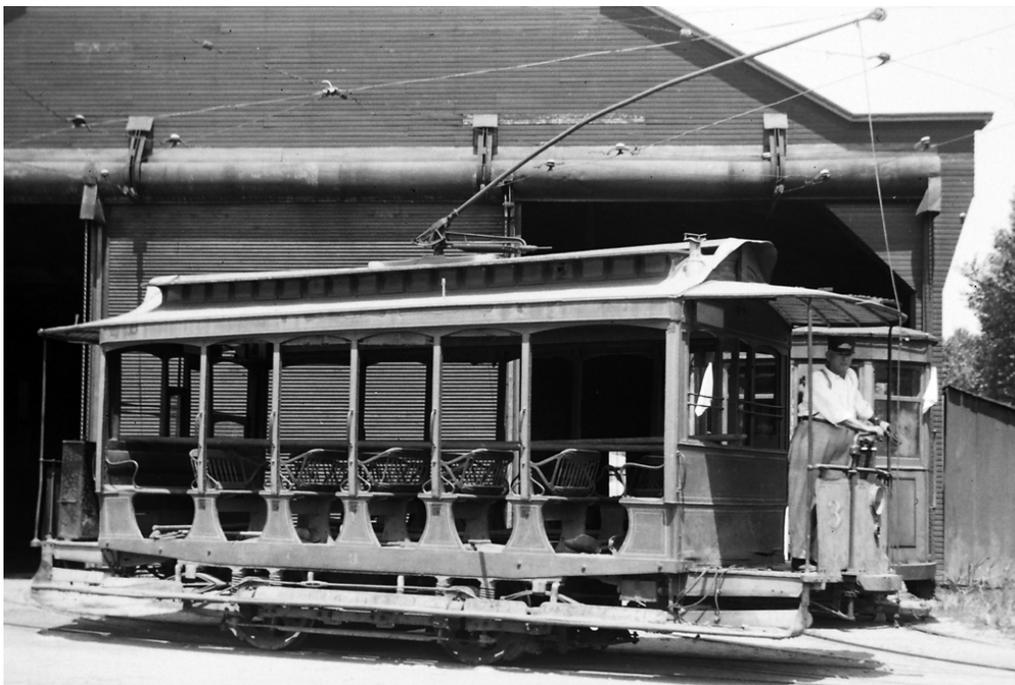
150 hp Miller gas engine replaced 100 hp engine in 1904 here, belted to two generators, operated until 1912, thereafter as required. Taken in 1937 to Ford-Edison Museum, Dearborn, Mich., from Lancaster Traction barns for display.



"The Dinkey" used on the Fairfield Traction Co. line to the state Boys' Industrial School south of here, a miniature steam engine operated car. Notice bell, "cow catcher", head light. The "Dinkey" was a popular ride in the early days of the car system.



Old No. 6 at Columbus St. – Forest Rose Cemetery terminal in 1937 with William E. Aumock, motorman 28 years here, at controls; James W. Bishop, Dearborn, Mich., special representative of Henry Ford, in doorway. Bishop came here to get 150 hp gas engine for Edison Museum. Car is being used as sesquicentennial headquarters.

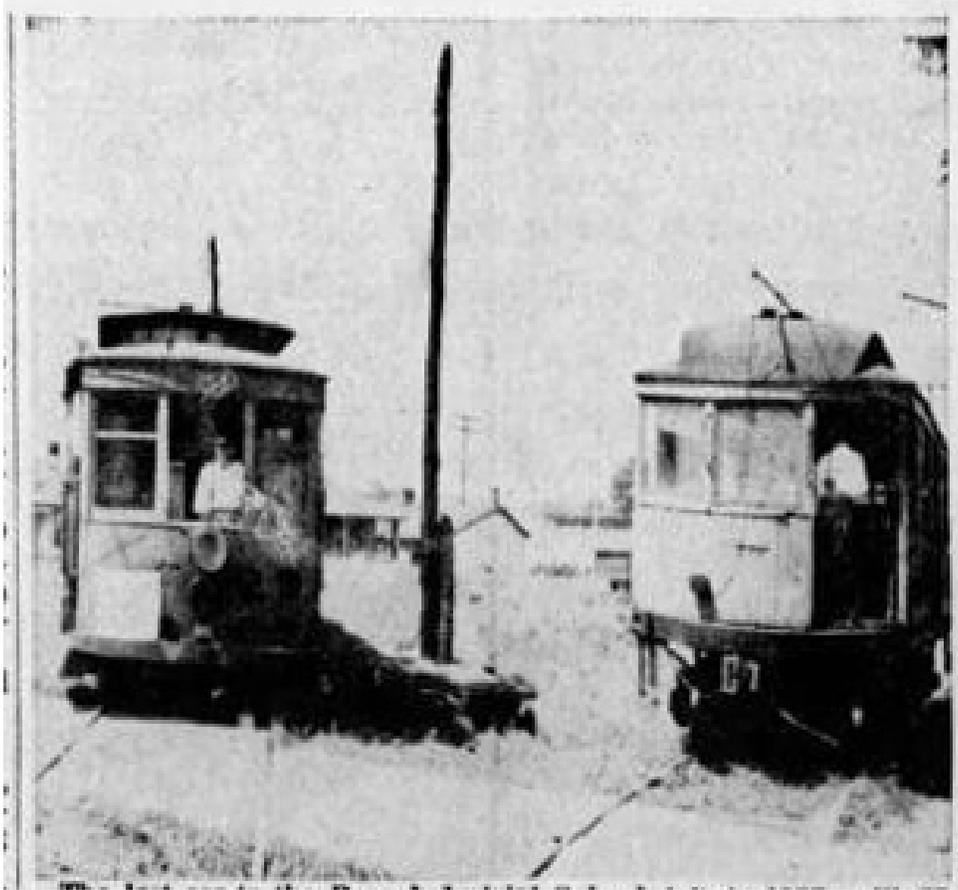


The “summer or open” street car of the Lancaster Traction Co. shown at the barns where it still remains today. Many a gay ride was taken on this historic vehicle during the county fairs, trips to the B.I.S. on Sunday afternoons. Romances blossomed; friendships were formed aboard this trolley. It is being used this week downtown as sesquicentennial headquarters.

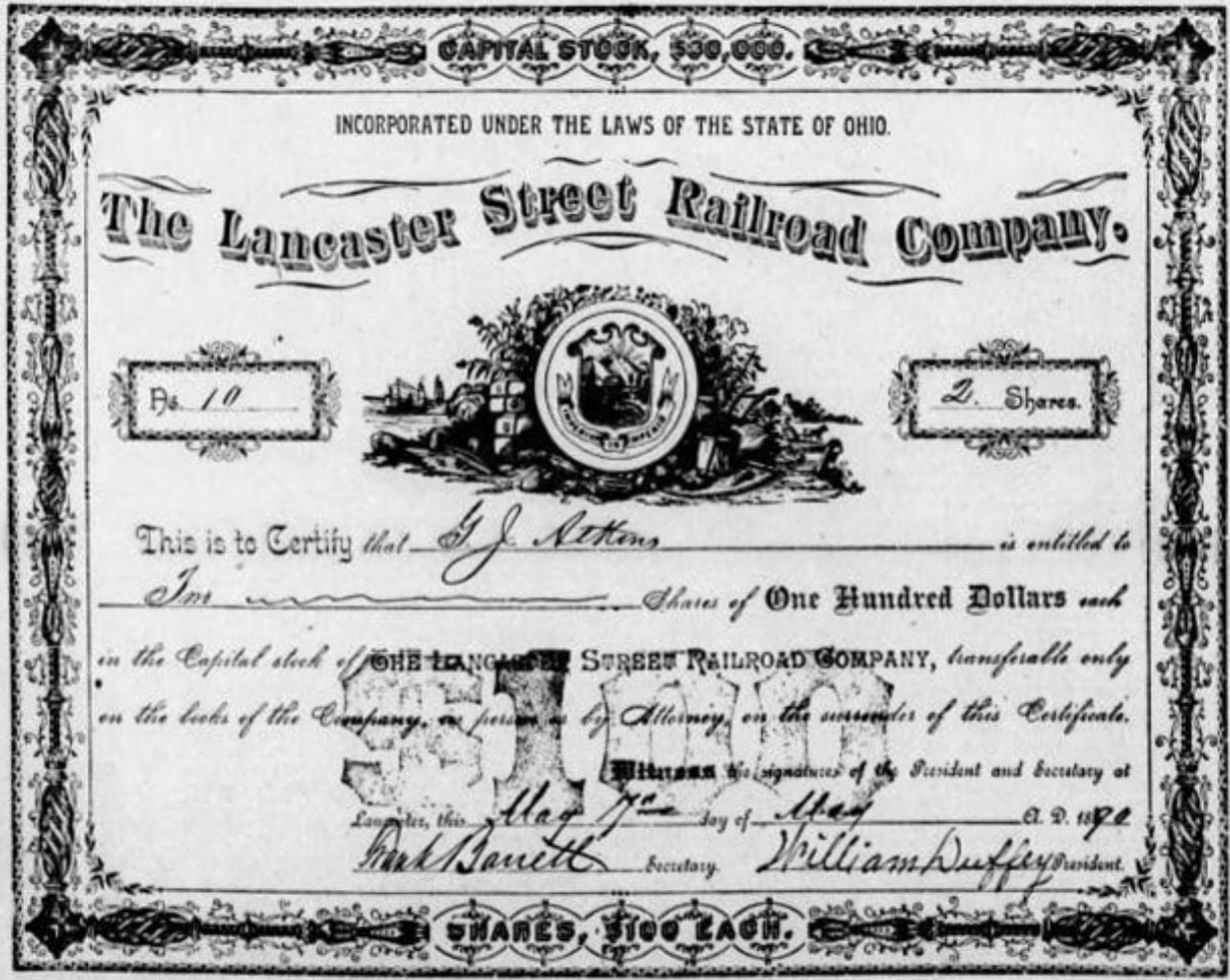


The Force – Officials, supervisors, shop and maintenance men, motormen, other employees of Lancaster Traction Co. pictured in October, 1937 on Main St. when street cars were being run for the last time are: standing, left to right, Miss Marjorie Phillips, bookkeeper; E.D. Rabourne, Hiram Strayer, Robert Spencer, motormen; Willian Richardson, shop; Henry Schwalbach, track foreman; E.O. McLain, motorman, Charles McGinnis, BIS line motorman; Sam Brown, motorman' J.R. Smith, superintendent; H.B. Peters, president, general manager, P.R. Peters, secretary-treasurer.

Kneeling, left to right, motorman Robert Williamson, James Anthony, Charles Hartley, Dan Schwalbach, only one is Transit, Inc., bus driver today; Lee Bierly, Glenn Raymond, motormen; Rodney Bell, shop, Homer Bender, shop foreman, and William Aumock, motorman, longest period of service, 1900-1937.



The last car to the Boys Industrial School, left in 1937, with Motorman Charles McGinnis at controls, stopped where Pennsy RR siding, on the right, connected with the trolley line just south of railroad depot here.



Reproduction of stock certificate for two \$100 shares in the Lancaster Street Railroad Co. in May 1891, the horse drawn street car system which preceded the trolleys here, founded in 1896. Andy Bauman, Frank Barrett and William Duffey were the organizers.