



(Columbus Evening Dispatch, January 19, 1902) – The responsibilities appertaining to the successful operation of a street railway, employing nearly 500 men and moving over 300 cars on schedule time, are far greater than the average layman stops to consider or is able to understand unless perhaps he happens to be directly connected with an enterprise of the same proportions.

The local company has a motto which every old employe has long since learned “Keep the Cars Running.” Every man on the company’s pay roll has made a promise to “keep the cars running,” even though he is compelled to make personal sacrifices. The necessity of such a promise and fulfillment of it is best understood by persons who have perchance witnessed a blockade of cars, which frequently occurs in larger cities.

After a blockade, motormen and conductors may try as hard as they can and still be unable to regain their schedule time; not even during a day. Cases of this kind, however, are unusual. Promptness and ability count for much in emergencies and prevent the loss of many minutes. Sixty seconds is a very short space of time, but when it is considered that a railroad train frequently covers a mile in a minute and a street car four or five city blocks, the importance of a minute is well known to engineers or motormen.

The woods are believed to be full of men who aspire to be motormen and conductors. If the daily crowd about the office of the company is a safe criterion. They would all gladly agree to perpetuate the motto if employed but, there are certain qualifications which stare applicants in the face at nearly every turn in the company's offices, printed on large cards.

MOTORMEN AND CONDUCTORS

An applicant for either position must enjoy good health and be morally [fit]. He must also be a gentleman, with a reputation not tarnished beyond repair. He must also have a good [heart]. This does not mean, however, that [he is] supposed to be charitable to persons occupied in looking out the car windows, when he (if a conductor) [??] in sight to collect fares. On the other hand, it means that he must not be subject to drinking spells or other [????] traced to weak hearts. His lungs must be sound, and his eyesight clear without the aid of spectacles. The applicant must have free use of both arms and feet. If applying for a conductorship, he must weigh not over [??] pounds; if he desires the [place] of a motorman he must weight [??] pounds. In each place the applicant must practice sobriety. The age is from [??] years to [??] years. The [????] height is five feet nine inches. [If he] is shorter than five feet nine inches, he is not qualified.

HOURS AND PAY

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..... to early runs. Before they are trusted with a car they are taught how it is made and how small breaks are repaired, such as burning out of fuses. The motormen learn what effect every turn of the controller has on the mechanism of the car before he is pronounced alright.

The average wage for a conductor or motorman is \$15.50 for 7 days. The men start in at a salary of 16 ½ cents an hour. In nine months they receive 17 cents an hour. After one year they are paid 18 cents. In addition to the wages paid employees of more than six months experience are paid the same dividend or interest on the amount of money they receive in wages as is paid the stockholders on what they have invested, or, in other words, the employees participate in the earnings of the company. The company also has another inducement. It is in the form of presents.

To motormen or conductors who are continually in the company's employ for five years an overcoat or suit is given, with one stripe of gold braid on the arm. Two uniforms or an overcoat and suit are presented to men in the company's employ for 10 years or more. A stripe of honor is allowed for each five years continuous employment. A number of men have three or four stripes. Counting the wages, dividend, and cost of clothes, some of the men receive \$18 per week of seven days.

LOSSES AND HOW MADE GOOD

Some persons have the reputation among street car men of "forgetting" to pay their fare. They are said to do this in many cases while laboring under the delusion that they are really riding free or at the cost of the company. A majority of such persons accomplish their purpose to ride free, but in many other cases conductors pay for them and eventually lose their places, if 'tis fond that fares are being missed too often. The

inspectors of the company and possibly others check up a car and make a report. Should it differ from the conductor's report he is called on the carpet. Naturally it is very embarrassing to explain why the register failed to show up a certain number of passengers.

Conductors not only lose in this direction but are the recipients of bad money the same as any other ordinary citizen. Sometimes they make a mistake in the number of cash fares or ticket fares, which they leave, by the way, at the barns of the company and then their report which they leave at the office as they pass each time on their car, does not balance.

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THE WRECK CREW

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..... car has the right of way over all divisions. When it leaves its headquarters the foreman telephones transportation foremen inspectors and the different stations and the cars along the route over which the wreck car is to pass are hurriedly sidetracked or gotten out of the way as rapidly as possible.

The wreck crew has a record of making the run from Rose avenue barn to High and Broad streets in 3-4 minutes after the message of a break of an axle was received. They take great pride in making time. At night two men are on duty and the other five or six are picked up at their homes near the barn. The latter are usually waiting for the car as they are notified by electric bell immediately upon receipt of the message of a wreck. The wreck crew consists of some of the most trusted and oldest men in the service.

THE TROLLEY WAGONS

The trolley wagons are stationed at the south barn. Its attaches are as anxious and in as much of a hurry where there's a "break" as the wreck crew. One wagon has a quick hitch attachment, similar to those used in the fire department. The trolley wagon men look out for overhead work. When a trolley wire breaks there is just about as much excitement and danger in its vicinity as one cares to be associated with. The trolley crew has learned the trick of catching hold of hot wires and do this daily while the inexperienced expects to see them electrocuted, so firm is the belief that to touch a trolley wire, even when attached to the guy wires, means instant death.

KINDS OF CARS AND COSTS

The small cars that were first used on Columbus streets were hardly large enough to accommodate 25 people comfortably, but those now in service seat close to 50 people, while a crowded car will hold 100 persons. Very few people know that the latest cars of the company cost, in round figures, \$4,000, or the price of a modern home.

The cars that the company first had in July, 1892, when the electrical system was completed, were somewhat smaller than the large ones recently purchased. Although smaller, people who had never seen electric cars doubted very much whether the horseless car would be able to go up the steep, temporary trestle which superseded the tunnel on High street, where the viaduct now stands. The cars in service are inspected and dusted every day and scrubbed every other day.

HOW ROAD IS SYSTEMATIZED

The road is operated from a number of departments. They are the executive, accounting, maintenance of way, transportation, car headquarters, power stations, department of overheard work, and last but not least the claim department. Each department has its part of the enormous work to perform to 'keep the car running.'

STREET CAR BARN

One of the interesting features about a street car barn is the room in which the men wait until it is time for them to go out on their runs. There is hardly a minute of the day or night but that a motorman or conductor cannot be found here. New men or subs find it a most agreeable headquarters, principally because there is much to be learned about the peculiarities of passengers, and because of the continual entertainment that is on, either in funny story telling or games.

It is in this room that many a passenger gets fits for having feet that obstruct the car aisle or for always presenting a transfer which has long since expired. Everything goes in the "waiting room." You can expectorate on the floor and no one says aught.

If time is hanging heavily, you might "butt" into a checker game or play at dominoes. In case there is no chance for you, it is possible both games will fade into insignificance if you pull out a few pennies and challenge one of the men to pitch for a line, against you. This penny pitching is a favorite pastime, and while away many an idle minute, especially for the subs, who report every day whether they are requested to or not. In each barn there is a stove kept red hot in the waiting room, so the men who come in to eat their lunches can throw out, so to speak, or warm up before going on duty. In the extreme cold weather hot coffee and sometimes sandwiches are served free.

OWL CARS

When owl cars were first put in service, there was a great deal of guessing on the part of the men as to who would be selected. A great many of the employees who wanted to be assigned to this work have had occasion to be thankful since, because they have learned that an owl car conductor must be both a diplomat as well as a handy man with his fists to escape a drubbing nightly.

During the summer months these owl car conductors fare the worst. Just why no one has been able to explain, unless men feel more scrappy in hot weather. The South High street car conductor has had the hardest encounters. This is attributed to [wet glasses] sold at beer gardens south of the city. Several times patrons of these places not only insulted the conductor but assaulted him besides. Another man was put in charge and he proceeded to lick the roadies whenever he thought it necessary. They found that he would not stand for back talk now he has had comparatively no trouble as of late. It was on this division that a conductor

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THE END