



TROLLEYS WERE NOVELTY IN 1896
Whole families went for Sunday rides.

FIRST TROLLEY ARRIVED IN 1896

Street Car Story

By ETHEL SIMMONS
Staff Writer

When the first street cars came to Birmingham, a team of horses was sent out to meet them to pull them over the hill. After the power house was put into operation in August, 1897, the street cars' ascent was not nearly as colorful.

Cows and chickens and an occasional horse and rig traveled on Woodward. Six cows being driven home from pasture were killed when they were struck by one of the new electric street cars. People would take a trolley ride

as the high point of their Sunday afternoon, just as families today go out for a Sunday drive.

THERE WAS a flowing well of cold, clear water on what became the site of car barns, and people came from Detroit and Pontiac for a refreshing drink. They brought containers to carry home an extra supply of water. The first of four new electric interurbans came into Birmingham June 18, 1896, and the whole village was out to see the arrival. George Hendrie was, according to The Birmingham Eclectic of

the day, "on the front vestibule of the first car, acting in the capacity of motorman."

BIRMINGHAM residents rode their carriages into Royal Oak to board the new cars that had come from Detroit with power from the Citizen's Railway; 40 miles an hour kept that first historic ride moving. Hendrie and his brother Strathearn of Royal Oak, working with Frank Springsteen, had charge of laying the tracks for the old Oakland line and for erecting the powerhouse in Birmingham.

In the Dec. 19, 1895, issue of The Eclectic it was reported, "It is said that our Royal Oak friends are 'red-headed' over the fact that the power house of the new Oakland Railway is to be located in this place."

THE FIRST electric street car to go out to Pontiac went in 1897, and 10,000 Oakland County residents greeted it there.

Thirty-five years of continuous trolley service from Detroit through Birmingham to Pontiac served the communities until the lines were abandoned in favor of buses.

If you were a passenger in those early trolley days, you had a nickel ready for your fare from Birmingham to Royal Oak. It was 15 cents if you took the long haul into Detroit.

At the time service was discontinued in April, 1931, the fare was 30 cents.

THE FIRST interurbans ran one every hour, both ways, for 18 hours, and their speed was 12 miles per hour.

Originally known as the Oakland Railway, the line became the Detroit United Railway Nov. 19, 1909, when the village commission granted that franchise. In 1928, the Eastern Michigan System took over the operation.

Almeron Whitehead, cofounder of The Birmingham Eclectic, figured in the early history of the electric street cars. He was serving as village president at the time the commission, in December, 1895, gave permission to the Oakland Co. to lay its tracks and run its wires through Birmingham.

WHAT LED TO the trolleys' eventual scrapping in 1931 had begun in 1922 when the City of Detroit purchased all electric railway lines within its limits and charged high costs to interurban lines for use of the rails.

The interurban Detroit United Railway countered by building terminals at the edge of Detroit and establishing a bus transfer system to the Peoples Motor Coach Co. which operated inside Detroit.

Unified bus service began to get underway when the Pye Bus Co. was purchased in 1924 by the Star Motor Coach Lines, owned by William McCallum, principal bus operator in Birmingham.

THE DUR went into receivership in 1925—but under jurisdiction of the United States District Court, it continued to expand routes, assimilating the Star Motor Coach Line in 1925.

By 1928, through additional acquisitions, the DUR had acquired a well-integrated system of interurban and bus routes, and these were consolidated into a single corporate unit.

Later becoming Eastern Michigan Railways, the company discontinued its interurbans in 1931 but again went into receivership, with its other operations. However, EMR emerged from the worst depression years and receivership in 1934, as the Eastern Michigan Motorbuses.

SEVERAL reorganizations later, Greyhound received complete control of the transport firm through an exchange of stock.

The change became effective April 1, 1941, and the corporate name was changed to Great Lakes Greyhound Lines.

'Talking Machines' Made Debut in '83

The telephone came to Birmingham more than 80 years ago.

Its arrival in 1883 was as colorful a story as life evidently was in those days. But, according to the written words of J. M. Kelly, an early telephone company manager:

"The first telephones in Birmingham were difficult to talk long distance on, or in fact, any distance, because noises like fish frying, steam hissing and explosions greatly distressed those brave enough to try. And a few did try in those days."

Those words of Kelly's came from the archives of the Michigan Bell Telephone Co., a successor to the first phone company in Birmingham.

THE TELEPHONE, then considered by many still a toy, came in 1883 to Birmingham after L. A. Sherman, then of the Port Huron Daily Times, interested J. Allen Bigelow, grocer and postmaster, in organizing an exchange.

A telephone line connecting Detroit and Port Huron already was in operation and another line running through Royal Oak, Birmingham, and on to Pontiac, Holly, and Grand Rapids, was in the offing.

Sherman's proposal was that the people of Birmingham buy either stock in the company, or coupon books which could be dealt out in trade on long distance calls after the exchange was established.

Bigelow's interest in the telephone stemmed from the communication's activity between Almeron Whitehead, a clerk in his store, and George Mitchell, clerk across the way, who later became managers of the new exchange.

After reading of Alexander Graham Bell's "talking machine" in a newspaper article, Whitehead and Mitchell stretched skins like drumheads over two tin cans—one

for each store—and connected them with a waxed cord. They signaled to each other to come on the line by imitating a rooster's crow.

LATER, WHITEHEAD and Mitchell bought the store from Bigelow, assuming management of the telephone exchange. After several years as manager, Whitehead tired of it and turned the system over to Austin R. Ranks, another grocer.

Meanwhile, the New State Telephone Co., an independent organization not part of the originating firm, organized with 12 subscribers. It later withdrew from the field for lack of business.

Volney Nixon, a dry goods merchant, next ran the Birmingham exchange, followed by Mitchell, who moved it back to the store on Maple Street that he and Whitehead owned. The store was located a block off Woodward.

In those days a telephone cost approximately \$50 a year, and calls to Detroit cost 25 cents.

BY 1904, 24-hour a day telephone service was offered in Birmingham and Royal Oak. As the number of telephones increased, J. M. Kelly, a businessman and electrician, was named manager of the Royal Oak and Birmingham exchanges. New facilities were added and quarters were leased in Whitehead and Mitchell's new building across from the post office.

Birmingham had 310 phones by 1910, and the number soared to 2,855 in 1926; 8,300 in 1935; and to more than 5,000 by 1940. By the end of World War II, Birmingham had nearly 7,000 phones.

A new dial office was opened in Birmingham in 1950, and an addition was completed in 1952. At the time of the dial changeover Birmingham had about 9,000 phone customers and 10,000 telephones.

In 1953, Birmingham made history by becoming the second exchange in the nation to be offered Direct Distance Dialing. The new service enables Birmingham phone users to dial long distance calls to 13,000,000 telephones in 14 metropolitan areas across the nation. Birmingham then had 17,500 telephones.

GROWTH IN the next decade is borne out by statistics, which show Birmingham today has more than 40,000 telephones, including about 18,000 extensions, more than the total number of phones in 1953.

From 1883 when townspeople could reach only a few telephones, service has improved until today Birmingham phone users can dial more than 80,000,000 telephones throughout the United States and Canada.

Grocer-postmaster J. Allen Bigelow probably never envisioned the exchange growing as it did in 80 years.



CITY INSISTED ON THIS WAITING ROOM
Riders protested waiting in cold, snow.

BONES FOUND IN 1934

Many Scoff at Tale Of Local Mastodon

BY BARBARA UNDERWOOD
Special Writer

Unofficially known as "Dinosaur Pond," the small basin at Charing Cross and Brookdale roads, received its name soon after the bones of a young mastodon were found there in September, 1934. The pond was being deepened to form an artificial lake when the discovery was made.

Many residents of the nearby area, who have found the pond a favorite skating spot, apparently do not believe the tale that ancient bones actually were found there.

The writers of a Cranbrook Institute of Science bulletin, "The Bloomfield Hills Mastodon," theorize that because of illness or accident, the mastodon fell to the

ground and never rose. The bones were scattered by frost, decay or flesh-eating animals of the time.

ONLY THE SKULL, with a few vertebrae, and some ribs were found. They are now in the University of Michigan museum. The mastodon was thought to be a young one since it still had some of its milk teeth and the tusks were only about half as long as those of the average full-grown mastodon of the time.

Actually the term dinosaur is in error, since dinosaurs existed millions of years ago, and the formation of the basin and the existence of this species goes back approximately 25,000 to 30,000 years ago.

During the thousands of years of glacial development of the immediate surrounding area, the first ancestor of the Great Lakes was born. A narrow, shallow, crescent-shaped body of water, Lake Maumee had its highest shoreline extending into the Cranbrook area from Franklin Village, across Oakland Hills golf course to Quarton Road, a half mile south of Christ Church.

THE ROUGE RIVER also appeared about the same time, as a stream only a few miles long, and emptied into the Maumee near Brookside School.

The slope on which Christ Church was built, and the hills north of Lone Pine Road, between Cranbrook and Woodward, overlooked the lake. At this time the outlets to the Atlantic Ocean were still blocked by glacial ice and waters drained to the Gulf of Mexico.

In the formation of the final beaches of Lake Maumee, as the water receded, "Dinosaur Pond" was formed.



IN EARLY DAYS
Telephones were "trying."



60 YEARS LATER
A plus for progress.