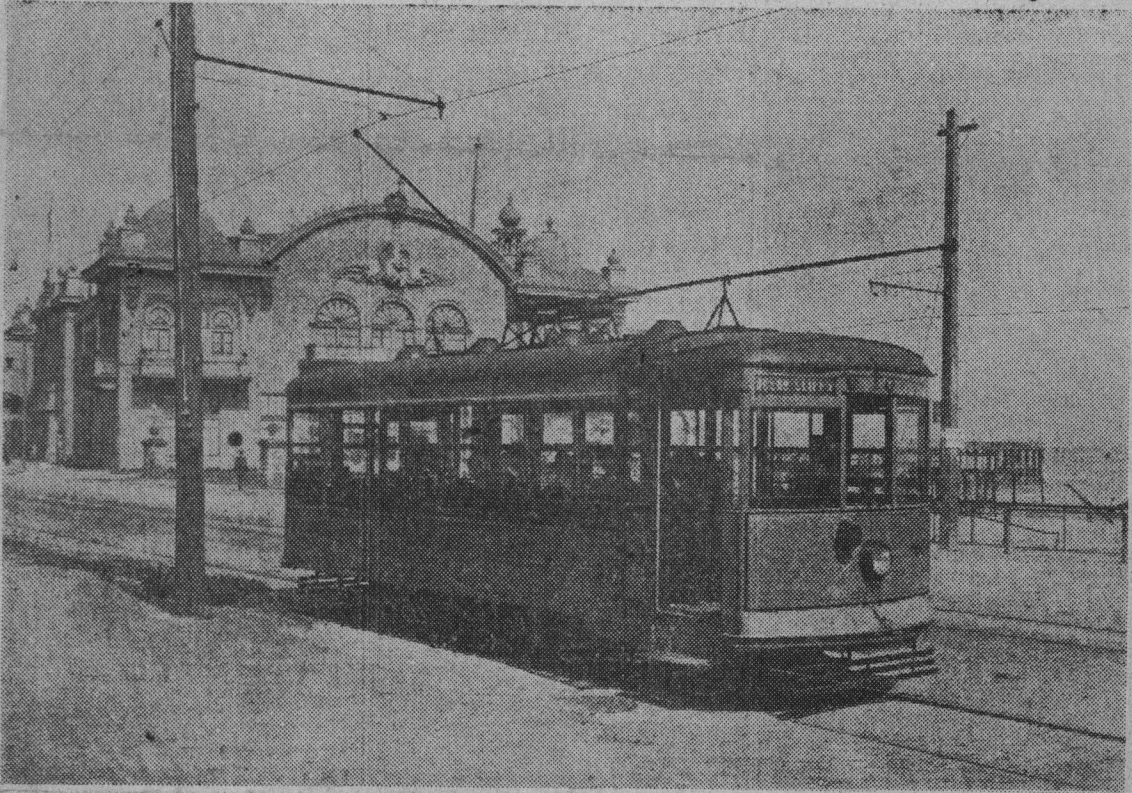


Santa Cruz Yesterdays



FADE-OUT of ELECTRIC TRANSPORTATION, 1926—(From the Preston Sawyer Collection)

The last trolley car in local public service made its farewell run on Santa Cruz streets at midnight of January 14-15, 1926, ending almost 35 years of electrified transit here. Motorman-Conductor Lee Baldwin, driving a one-man Birney like the car shown above, departed the beach at 12, arriving a few minutes later at the old car barns, Pacific avenue and Sycamore street. Only hours later on the January 15 morning, motor buses started taking over.

Fifty years before, in 1876, "rapid" transit for Santa Cruzans had begun when a horse car trundled down narrow gauge tracks toward the beach.

Electricity Outmodes Horses
Electrification came in 1892. The

horse-drawn systems, one of which, the Ely line, extended as far as Twin Lakes, yielded to progress. The faster carriers served the Vue de L'Eau Casino, where is now the cliffs end of Woodrow avenue; provided transit between the downtown area, the beach and the Mission Hill hotels, Pope House and Bedell.

By 1904 rival companies were seeking new routes. Santa Cruz, Capitola and Watsonville Railway company had ambitious plans to continue on to the Apple City. They were completing the Capitola phase when Union Traction company was born by consolidation

with Santa Cruz Electric Railway. Capitola passengers were then enabled to transfer at Soquel and Pacific avenues, to a Casino car, one route being via Lincoln and Center streets to the S. P. depot and beach.

C. C. G. & E. Takes Over

Two years later Warren Porter's Union Traction company had been taken over by John Martin's Coast Counties Power company, predecessor of the present Coast Counties Gas and Electric company.

As the country recovered from the panic of 1907 the company tried to bolster financial returns by buying bigger and better cars. In 1908 the fine concrete trestle over the San Lorenzo river at Water street was built, which eventually became part of the present span. The metal plaque naming "Union Traction Company," John Martin, and others is still on the south railing.

Buy Smaller Cars

Saturday, July 2, 1910, Manager S. W. Coleman inaugurated thru car service from the beach to the very gates of De Laveaga park, by means of an extension from the previous terminus of that line. By the early 1920's the trend was to one-man cars. Several of the large old cars were converted. The company bought three or four Birneys of a smaller, single operator type, which remained in use the last two to three years. The company could muster 13 cars into service during peak periods. The Birneys were sold in 1927 and went to Bakersfield.

Physical value of the combined lines in 1906 was put at \$637,000, but the automobile had appeared. In 1927 nearly a million dollars in investment was written off by the C. C. G. & E.

The trolley cars which vanished from the city's streets in 1926 were followed by buses which still bore the name "Union Traction Company."