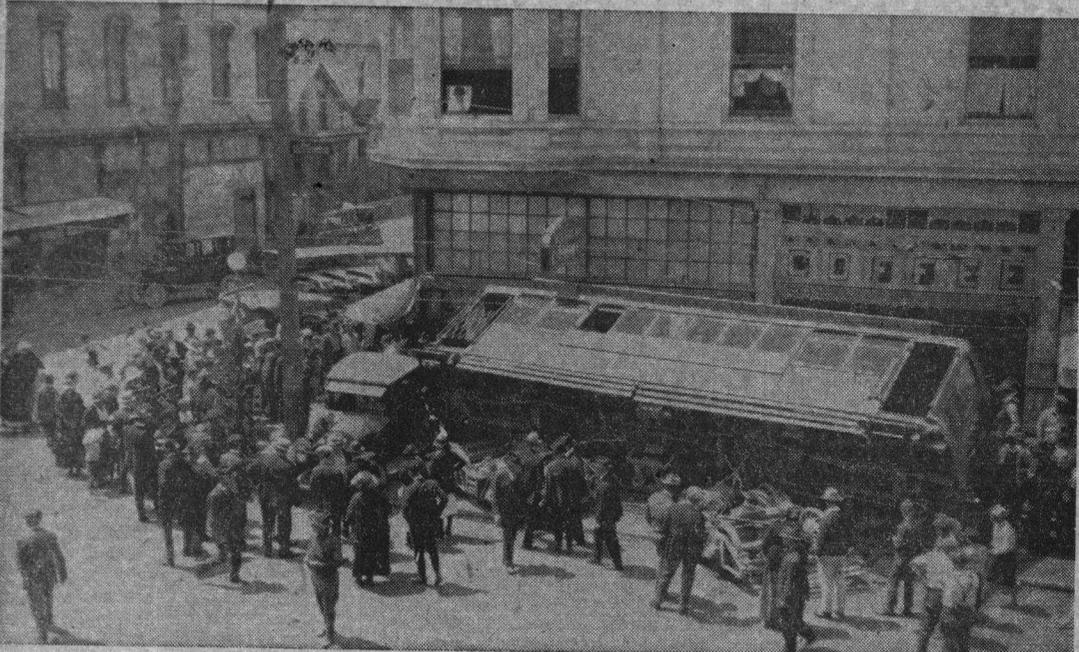


Santa Cruz Yesterdays



BIRD'S-EYE VIEW OF 1921 STREET CAR WRECK

(From the Preston Sawyer Collection)

Thirty-two years ago, about four and a half years before the final fade-out of electrical transportation here, the local street car system experienced its most spectacular accident.

A runaway car turned over in the middle of town! Fortunately there were no casualties and no major damage, but it was a spectacle that drew great throngs to downtown Santa Cruz on a Thursday afternoon late in August, 1921.

It was no common sight — a large street car sprawled on its side, resting only inches from two storefronts after teetering onto the sidewalk.

Had Started Eastward

Union Traction company car 18 eastbound from Soquel and Pacific avenues about 11 a. m., the 25th, had crossed the San Lorenzo river trestle, which paralleled the old covered bridge then razed, with the present concrete bridge just rising. At the Garfield-Riverside intersection, east end of the crossing, it collided with an auto.

Motorman-Conductor Claude Conlon and several passengers jumped out to give aid to three woman motorists whose machine had overturned. Only Mrs. Hildreth Foster and young son remained in the car. Suddenly old "18", which had been halted abruptly, with reverse applied, came to life and started backing toward town. Its trolley grinding sparks and refusing to

jump its wire, the car traversed the trestle, gaining momentum as it rolled down the slight incline toward Front street.

Modern Juggernaut

By the time it reached Pacific avenue it was going at a fair rate of speed. It swung sharply onto Pacific avenue, jumped the tracks, nudged a parked coupe, separated from its trucks and fell over into the position shown — in front of the then Orchid Sweet Shop on the Lincoln street corner, and to the right, what was then the Pacific Coffee store.

Mrs. Foster and her youngster were thrown from the car platform onto the sidewalk in front of the Walsh-Mellott shoe store. She sustained a skull fracture from which she later recovered, while the boy was not badly hurt.

The picture was made from a window of Roy Hammond's sign shop upstairs in the old Farmers Union building. Hammond later served as Mayor.

Old Building

To the left can be seen a part of the Duncan block, with Abrams' store on the ground floor and the Clayton rooming house upstairs. The modern Morris Abrams store occupies the site today.

The last trolley car in local public service made its farewell run at midnight, January 14, 1926, ending 35 years of electrified transportation here. Motor buses started

taking over on the morning of January 15.

Fifty years before had seen the beginnings of local transit by horse car lines along Pacific avenue between town and the beach. Electrification came in 1892.