

SANTA CRUZ YESTERDAYS



PIONEER UNION TRACTION CO. BUS, DEC. 1924 (From the Preston Sawyer Collection)

Local street transportation service moved into its third and presently existing phase at the end of 1924.

The story began in the middle 70's when little horse cars trundled down narrow gauge tracks, along Pacific avenue, to the beach.

Electrification arrived, on the same route, in 1892, marking the second step in local transit history. This step was destined to move through almost 35 years of success, expansion and finally, decline.

The intervening years had seen rise and fall of several lines which eventually were united under one head, the Union Traction company, in 1906. Under this banner the third step was taken—from electricity to gasoline, the present predominant motor bus method of transport.

Union Traction company developed or improved several routes which had trolley car service to DeLaveaga park, to Seabright, Twin Lakes and Capitola, and to Garfield Park and the Cliff Drive at Vue de l'Eau, later called Ocean Cliffs.

By the early 20's, the trend was to one-man cars. Several of the large old cars were converted. The company bought two or three cars of a smaller, single operator type (Birney). With these they could at one time muster 13 cars into service during peak periods.

Competition

As private car owners mush-

roomed in numbers, electric trolley service saw losses in their traffic. The local traction company met the situation 31 years ago this month. They took delivery on three large Mack auto buses and began tearing up the old street car tracks along Soquel avenue on the east side.

Bus service supplanted street cars on East Santa Cruz lines Friday, December 12, 1924. Manager Bob Cardiff announced that busses would run on regular schedule "just the same as street cars and give just as good service, with the advantage of alighting passengers at the curb instead of in the middle of the street."

Twenty-four passengers could be "comfortably accommodated" in each of the busses. Half hour service was given.

Final Electric Run

The entire swing-over was gradual. Not until midnight of

January 14, 1926, did the very last trolley car in regular service here make its final run. Pilot of the one-man Birney from the beach Casino up Pacific avenue, was Motorman-Conductor Lee Baldwin.

On December 9, 1924, a group of prominent Santa Cruz officials and business men, headed by Mayor John B. Maher, tried out one of the just-arrived buses on newly paved Cliff Drive.

In the picture, Union Traction company manager, R. H. Cardiff, of CCG&E, is at extreme left of the standees. Fifth in line (in light suit) is Mayor Maher. Managing Editor of the old Morning Sentinel, F. D. McPherson, late father of the present Sentinel-News publisher, stands with hat in hand, near the bus door.

A quartet of city-builders who wished to have the Casino for their "back-drop" are, l. to r., Fred R. Howe, Andy Balich, Fred W. Swanton and Morris Abrams.