

Short Stories of the Buckeye State

By J. H. Galbrath

FIRST STREET CAR IN COLUMBUS.

(Columbus Sunday Dispatch, July 26, 1925) – The history of street railways in Columbus dates back to June 10, 1854, when the Columbus Street Railway Co. was given the right to construct three described lines of railway and an indefinite fourth one by the city council. Those interested in the project were J. H. Riley, who was a publisher and book dealer; Theodore Comstock, capitalist; Thomas Sparrow, lawyer; Peter Ambos, businessman; C. P. L. Butler, banker; John S. Hall, capitalist; W. B. Thrall, printer and publisher, and Seneca W. Ely, the latter was a Chillicothe businessman.

One proposed line ran from the first toll gate south of the city on the Chillicothe pike to a mile north of North Public Lane, now Naghten street. The second is from a point a mile east of the corporation line in the Newark Road (Broad Street), west to Washington Street in Franklinton, south in that street to the Harrisburg Pike, and west in that Pike to Green Lawn cemetery. The third ran from High street in town street east to Parsons avenue, south in that avenue to Friend street (now Main) and east in Friend to a point beyond the eastern city boundary. The fourth was any route that might be deemed necessary or expedient.

A long delay ensued, and it was ten years to the day from the granting of those franchises in 1854 before the first car was run in the streets of Columbus. On June 10, 1863, shortly before noon, the first street car seen in the state capital ran from the car barn at Mound street to Union station. The fare charged was seven cents cash or five cents for tickets in packages. It is said that the cars were fairly well patronized from the start. They ran on a six-minute schedule and were horse-drawn.

It is a singular fact that for more than a year no cars were operated on Sunday. Columbus was but a village then, with the village ways, and activities were generally suspended on Sunday. But in June of 1864, following some agitation on the subject, both city and company realized that travel about the town was as essential on Sunday as any other day and Sunday street cars were operated.
