

YARMOUTH  
STREET  
RAILWAY

YARMOUTH STREET RAILWAY

The little town of Yarmouth, in Nova Scotia, is distinguished for many things ; for one thing, there is good reason to believe that it was the site of Leif Eriksson's Vinland settlement in the year 1000 A.D. (or 1003 A.D.); for another, its ownership of ocean-going ships on a per capita basis, was, at one time, greater than any other city or town in the world; today, it is a very pleasant little town, especially for those who understand and appreciate good food, and above all, it was one of the first towns in Canada to have an electric street railway. Other towns of similar size would not have been able to support a street railway but fortunately Yarmouth was approximately three miles long, but only about 300 yards wide !

The Yarmouth Street Railway was incorporated on May 3rd, 1887, but it was not until the Spring of 1892 that construction started. On August 6th, 1892, the line was completed from the Dominion Atlantic Ry. crossing, in the north end, to Moody's Corner, in the south, and car #11 made a trial trip over the line with the usual assortment of politicians and other gentry on board. On August 26th, the contractors, the Edison Company, turned the line over to the Company and regular service started.

Soon after, the line was extended northward to Milton Corner, and still later, to the Waterworks Pumping Station. In 1911, the line was extended southward from Moody's Corner to the Golf Club and northward from the Pumping Station, along the shore of Milton Pond to Murphy's Bridge, where the Canadian Pacific Railway's Lakeside Inn is, now.

In 1912, the Yarmouth Light & Power Co. was organized to amalgamate the Yarmouth Street Railway and the Yarmouth Electric Company.

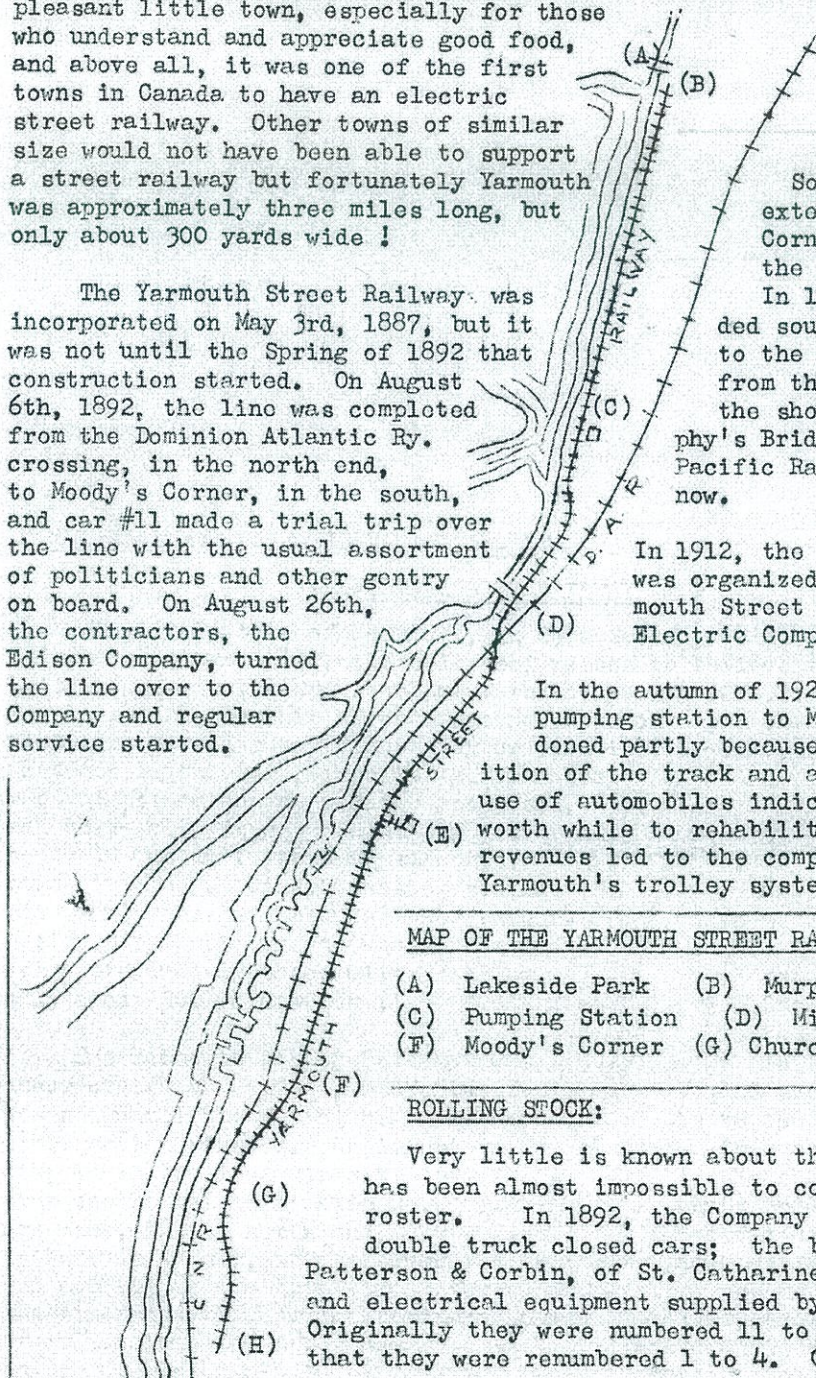
In the autumn of 1924, the section from the pumping station to Murphy's Bridge was abandoned partly because of the dangerous condition of the track and also because the increasing use of automobiles indicated that it would not be worth while to rehabilitate the line. Declining revenues led to the complete abandonment of Yarmouth's trolley system on October 20, 1928.

MAP OF THE YARMOUTH STREET RAILWAY

- |                     |                     |
|---------------------|---------------------|
| (A) Lakeside Park   | (B) Murphy's Bridge |
| (C) Pumping Station | (D) Milton Corner   |
| (E) King St.        | (F) Moody's Corner  |
| (G) Church Hill     | (H) Golf Club.      |

ROLLING STOCK:

Very little is known about the rolling stock and it has been almost impossible to compile a satisfactory roster. In 1892, the Company bought four single-end, double truck closed cars; the bodies were built by Patterson & Corbin, of St. Catharines, Ont. and the trucks and electrical equipment supplied by the Edison Company. Originally they were numbered 11 to 14, but it is believed that they were renumbered 1 to 4. One was gone by 1895 and



the others were scrapped about 1911. Also in 1892, two Patterson & Corbin horse cars were bought for use as trailers but they were not successful, so they were parked off the line and used as waiting rooms. It is believed that they were numbered 5 and 6, and they were scrapped at an early date.

There was a closed car, no. 10, bought prior to 1895 and scrapped in 1910. It may have been the same as nos. 11 to 14. In 1911, the Company bought three open cars and two closed cars. The three open cars, first numbered 37, 39 and 41 were soon changed to 7, 8 and 9 and were very small, with five benches and no bulkheads. They came from the Halifax Electric Tramway Company. It is believed that they came to Halifax in 1904 from the Worcester Street Railway where they were numbered 53, 55 and 57, and were built by J.M. Jones' Sons of Watervliet, N.Y. They were used until the end of the summer of 1924, and were scrapped in 1928.

The two closed cars bought in 1911 were numbered 11 and 12 and were old then and very small — smaller than our Association's Montreal Street Ry. car #274. No. 14 bought in 1913 was a little larger but also very ancient and probably built in the early Nineties. Nos 11, 12 and 14 were of unknown origin and while it has been suggested that they might have come from Halifax or Saint John, it is more likely that they were bought in or near Boston. In fact, one oldster, who had been a conductor in Boston, positively identified no. 14 as a car he had worked on in the "Bean" city. They were scrapped in November 1928.

Cars were painted with upper panel dark red, and lower panel straw.

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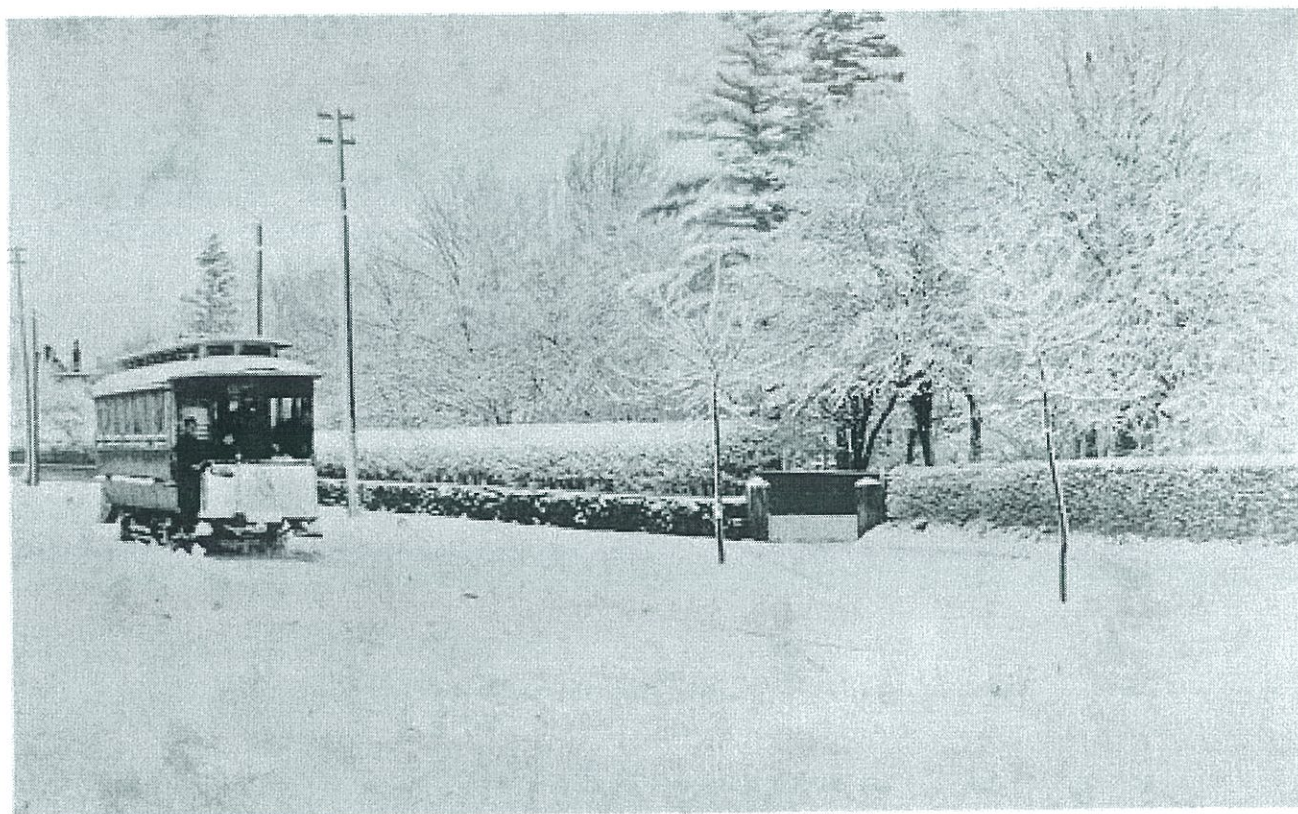


Last trip of the street cars, 25 October 1928. In December Trefry's Garage began a 21-passenger bus service on Main Street between Prospect Street and the South End's golf course; a single fare cost 10¢, or one could purchase three fares for 25¢. (PH-66A-7, YCMA)



Made on a Mac

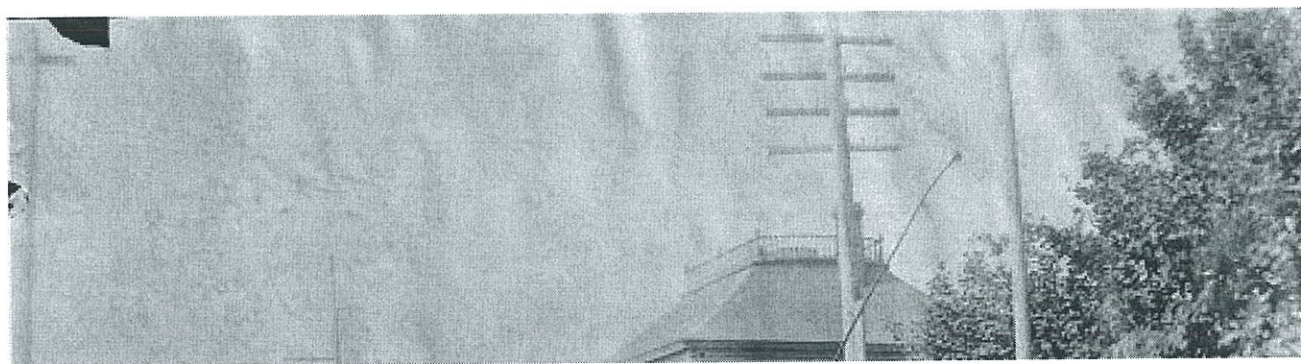
3, YCMA)

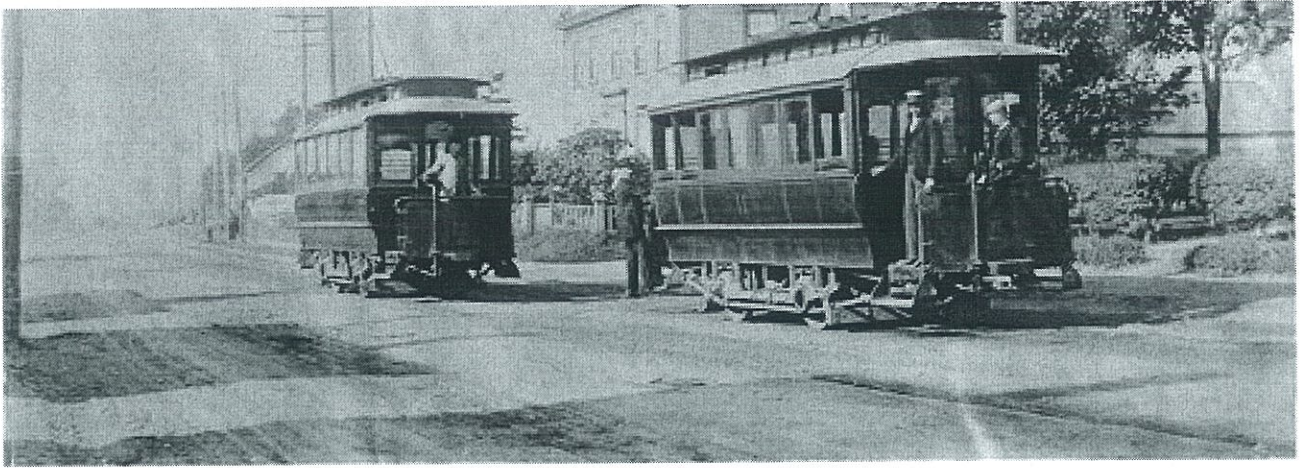


Main Street near Forest, February 1894. A Parker photograph. (Album 52, p. 24, YCMA)

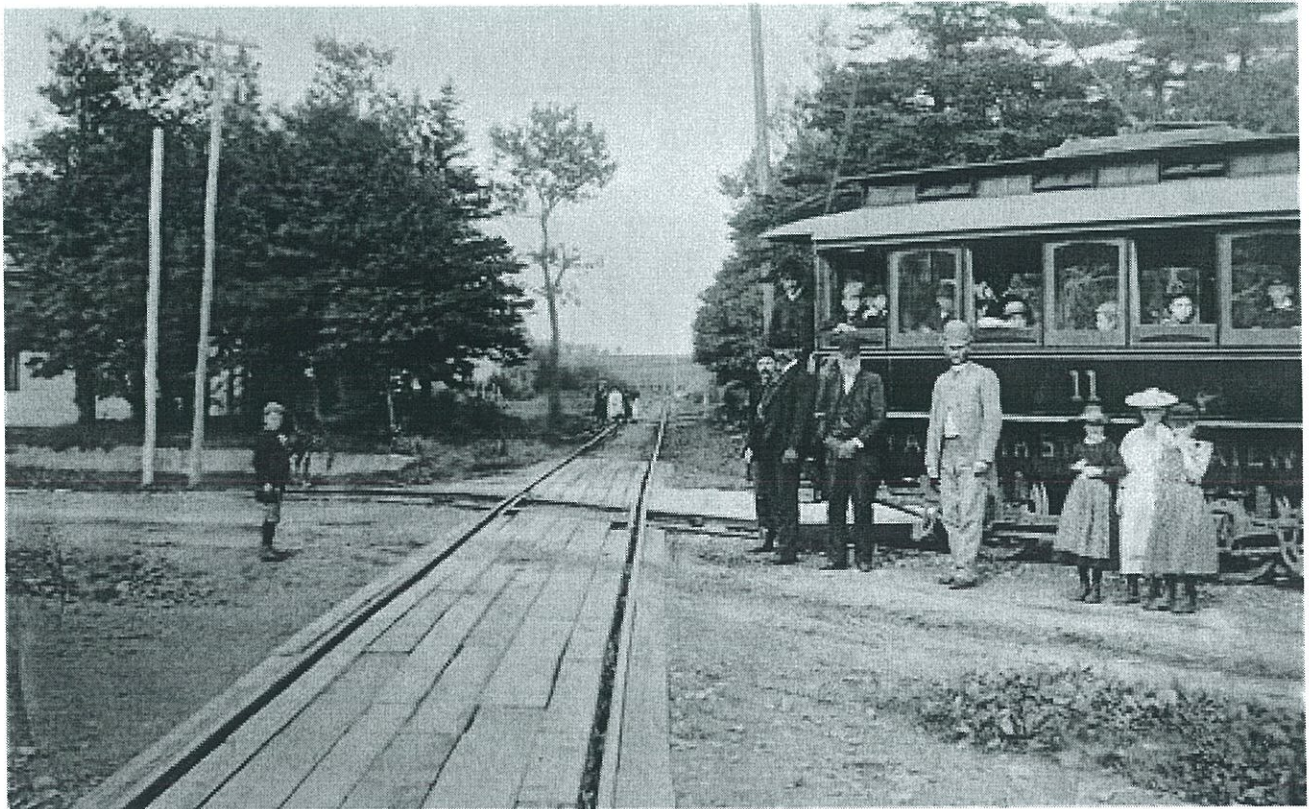


Main Street near Forest, February 1894. A Parker photograph. (Album 10, p. 12, YCMA)



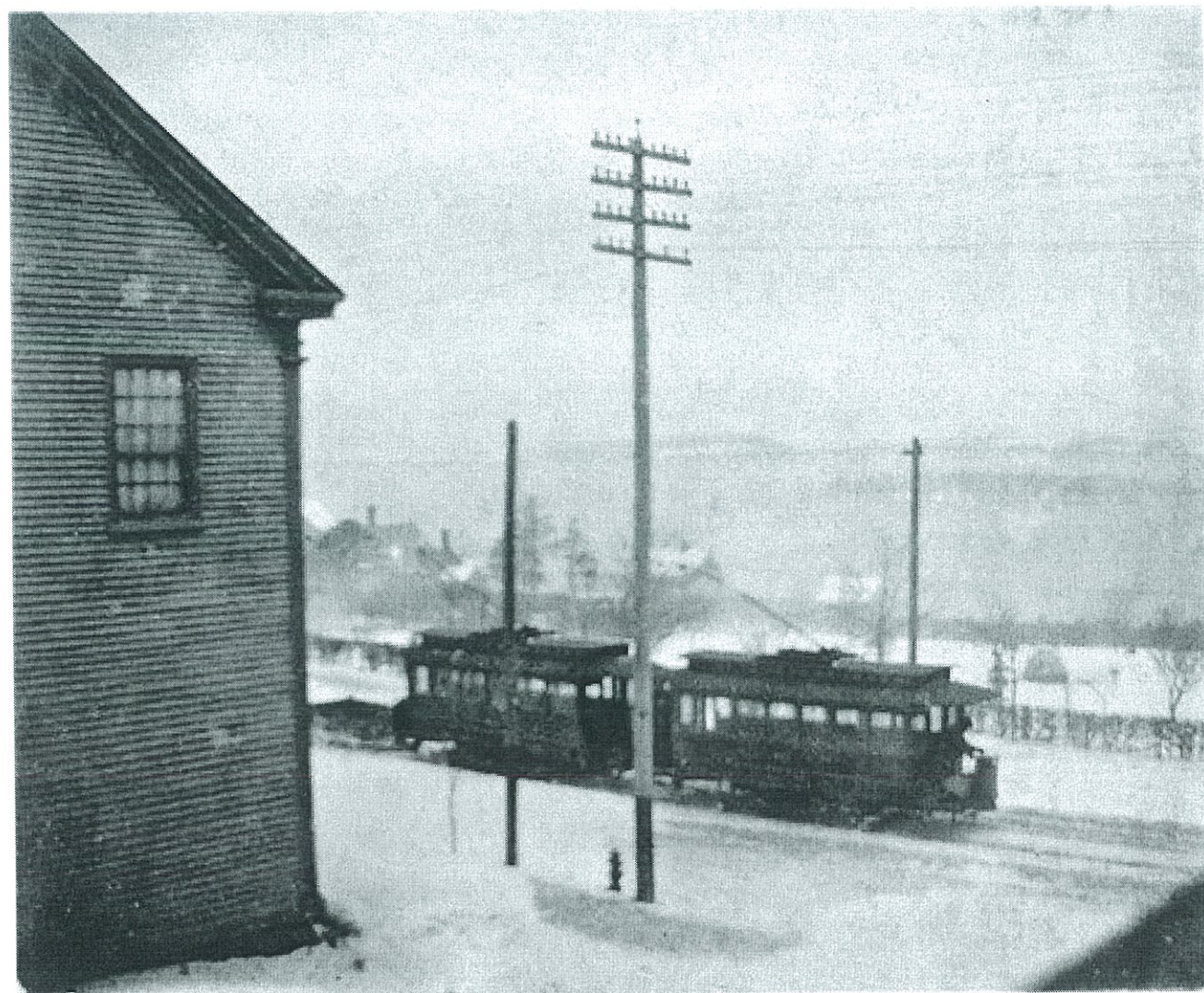


This photograph must have been taken near King Street, where there was a short double-track section past the car barn. (PH-66A-12, YCMA)





Main Street at the bandstand (right margin) with the Grand Hotel in the background. Victoria Park is at the left margin. (PH-66A-24, YCMA)



Victoria Park, Sunday, 23 January 1898, as viewed from the Grand Hotel. The First Baptist Church is at left. In the distance are Wyman Head (centre) and Doctor's Island (right). (PH-66A-

# Yarmouth's Street Railway

As a child, visiting my grandparents in Watertown, Massachusetts, I would lie in bed, awaiting sleep; and in the distance the electric street car on Mount Auburn Street would begin to murmur, starting, stopping, growing ever louder, roaring by a half block away, then fading, slowly, into silence and the night. A century ago such recollections also would have seemed natural and familiar to generations of Yarmouth's children.

The Yarmouth Street Railway Company was organized in July, 1888 [1, p 590], and its street cars served Yarmouth's residents for 36 years, from August 1892 through October 1928. The delay between organization and operation was caused by rapid technological change.

"Initially, it was intended to have the cars pulled by horses, then they were going to use electric batteries located on the cars, but since the overhead power line connected by way of a trolley pole to motors under the car was being perfected, [the Company] waited for the system to be perfected." [2]

Even so, Yarmouth was the first community in the Maritime Provinces, and the second in Canada, to install an electric street railway. Indeed, Yarmouth seemed a perfect site for such an undertaking.

"Yarmouth was well adapted for a street railway on account of its length from south to north along Main Street. It was comparatively level with no steep grades. Since the waterfront and the business establishments ran parallel to the rail line, people found it convenient for business and pleasure. The conductors frequently carried both verbal and written messages from one end of the town to the other for people. One lady, living in Milton, recalls her mother sending her husband's lunch to his shop downtown by street car when the weather was bad." [2]

In one of the Company's memorable moments,

"At 10:30 o'clock on Sunday morning, March 19th, 1899, whilst clearing the snow from the track of the Street Railway, two motor cars being harnessed together, the forward car jumped the track, and in an instant crashed into the southern window of the store of T. R. Jolly & Co., completely demolishing the window. Before the car could be stopped it had entered the store about one-third of its length, breaking the plate glass windows and the iron columns, and wrecking the fixtures in the window. Conductor McMellon was thrown 15 feet, but was unhurt." [1, p.

644]

The following images depict life in a small town during an era of electric street cars.

### References

[1] J. Murray Lawson, *Yarmouth Past and Present: A Book of Reminiscences*. Yarmouth Herald, Yarmouth NS, 1902. 681 pp.

[2] Paul Thibault, "Yarmouth's Street Railway," *Yarmouth (N.S.) Vanguard*, Tuesday, 5 April 1994, p. 10B.

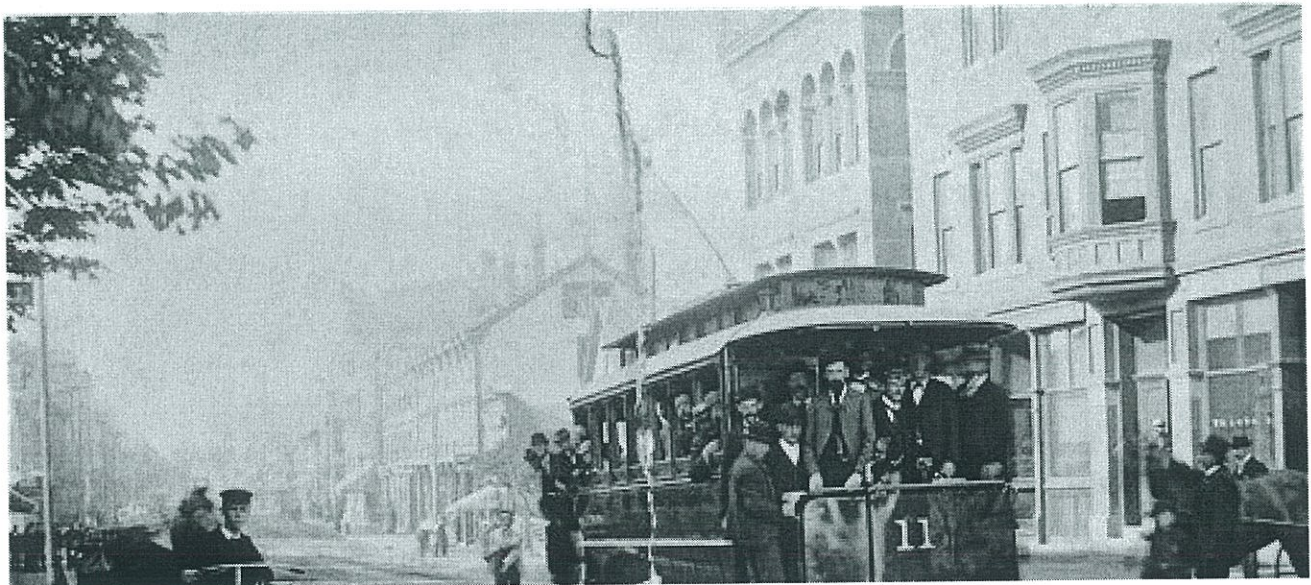
[3] I thank archivist Lisette Gaudet, of the Yarmouth County Museum and Archives, for providing access to the photographs and archival material concerning the Yarmouth Street Railway Company. All photographs labeled Yarmouth County Museum and Archives (YCMA) are copyrighted. Please contact the Archives if you would like to acquire a photo.

[4] My thanks, as always, to Wilfred Allan for permitting me to display digital images of his postcards.

William Day (1 January 2014)

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The Yarmouth Street Railway Company began operating after tea on Friday evening, 26 August 1892. Its cars carried 600 passengers that day, 1600 on Saturday, and 1600 on Sunday. The cars began making regular trips on Monday, 29 August. A single fare cost 5¢; but one could purchase a strip of six fares for 25¢. Photograph by L. G. Swain. (PH-66A-13, YCMA)



Main Street near Forest, facing north. From 15 April to 15 November, the street cars left Milton and the South End at 6:45 a.m., made 15 minute trips until 10:45 p.m., and on the last trip returned to the car barn at King Street. From 15 November to 15 April, the cars made 20 minute trips between 6:40 a.m. and 10:40 p.m. (Wilfred Allan)



Main Street near Cumberland, facing north. The third building at right is the Salvation Army Citadel. (PH-66A-23, YCMA)



Main Street near Cliff, facing north. At left is the Yarmouth Hotel, which faces down Cliff Street.  
(PH-66A-27 = Album 10, p. 5, YCMA)





Main Street near Brown, facing north. A sign for the Royal Opera House is at the right margin; in 1890 the Yarmouth Directory listed it simply as a music hall. The Post Office lies beyond at the intersection with John Street. (Wilfred Allan)

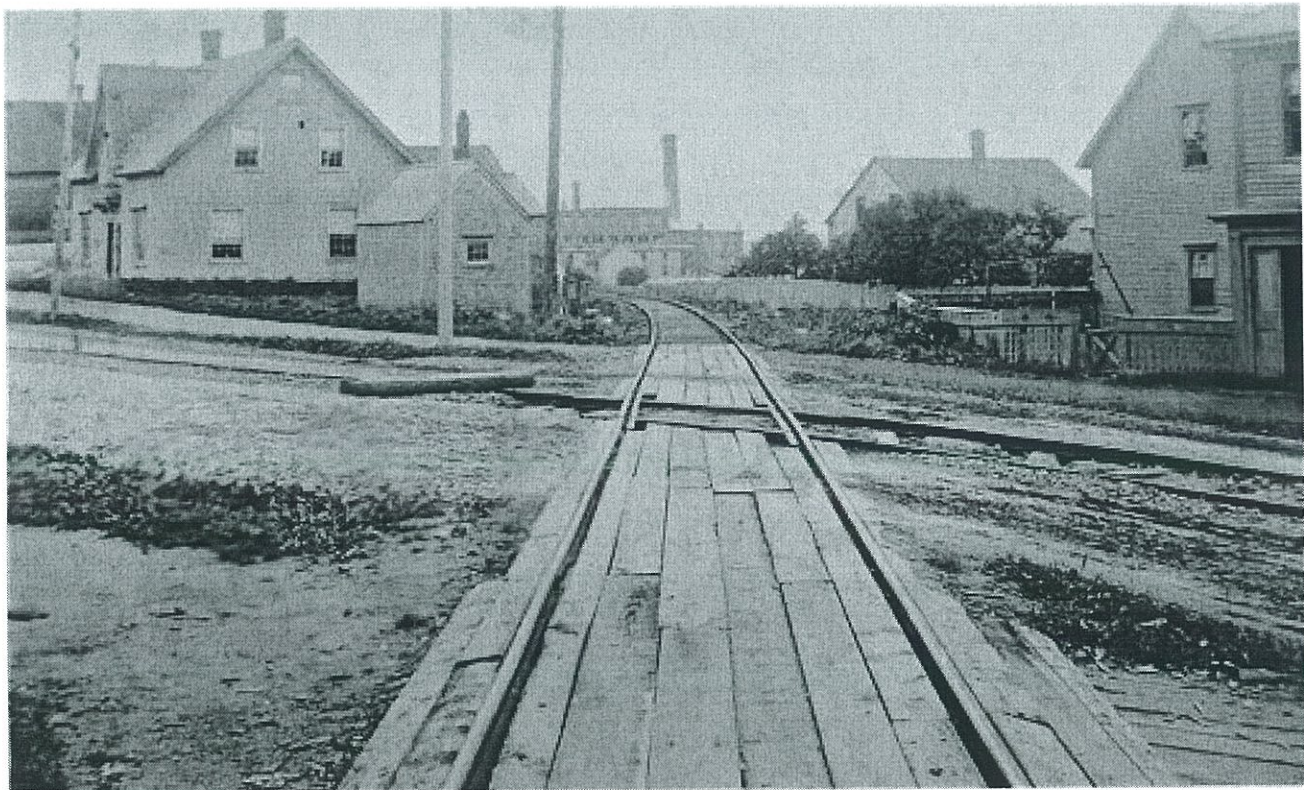


Main Street facing north from Brown Street. The Post Office is at the right margin, with John Street and the J. A. Craig Drug Store beyond. (PH-66A-8, YCMA)



Main Street facing south from Collins Street. The Exchange Bank is at the right margin with Jenkins Street beyond. The steeple on the horizon is that of Providence Methodist Church in the South End at the intersection of Main and Barnard Streets. (PH-66A-5, YCMA)

Dominion Atlantic Railway crossing at Main Street in Milton, facing northeast. In the distance are ladies at the Elm Street crossing. (PH-66A-10, YCMA)



Dominion Atlantic Railway crossing at Main Street in Milton, facing southwest. In the distance is the Cosmos Cotton Mill on Water Street. (PH-66A-19, YCMA)

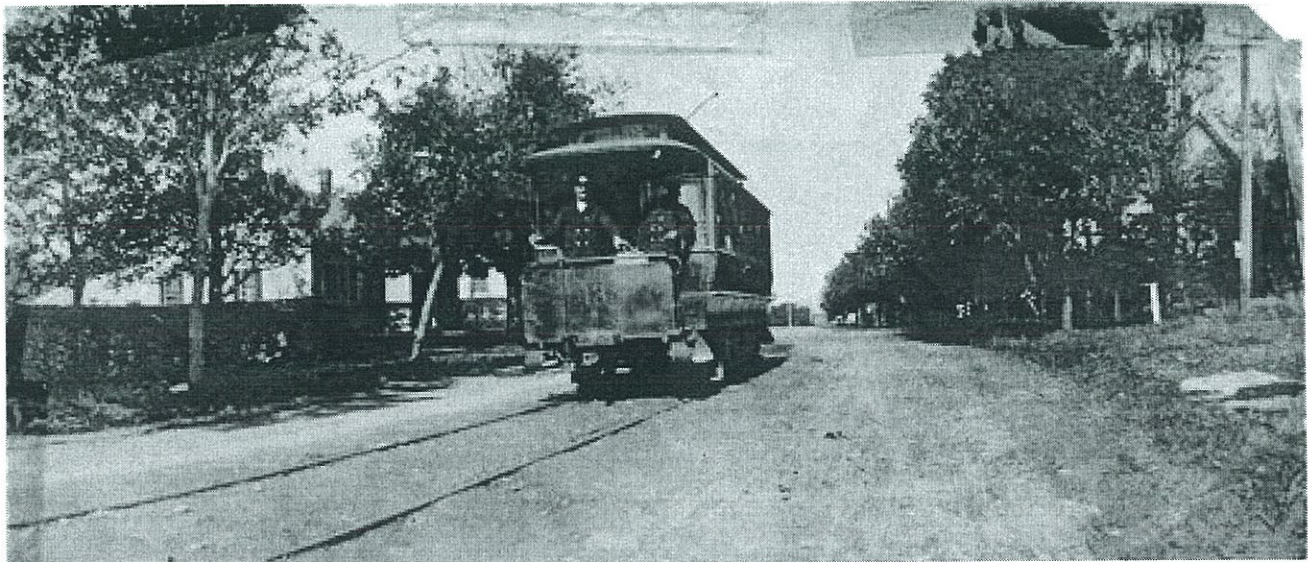


Milton Corner after Clara Killam's drinking fountain was installed in May 1893. The buildings at the left and right margins are still standing. (PH-104-49, YCMA)



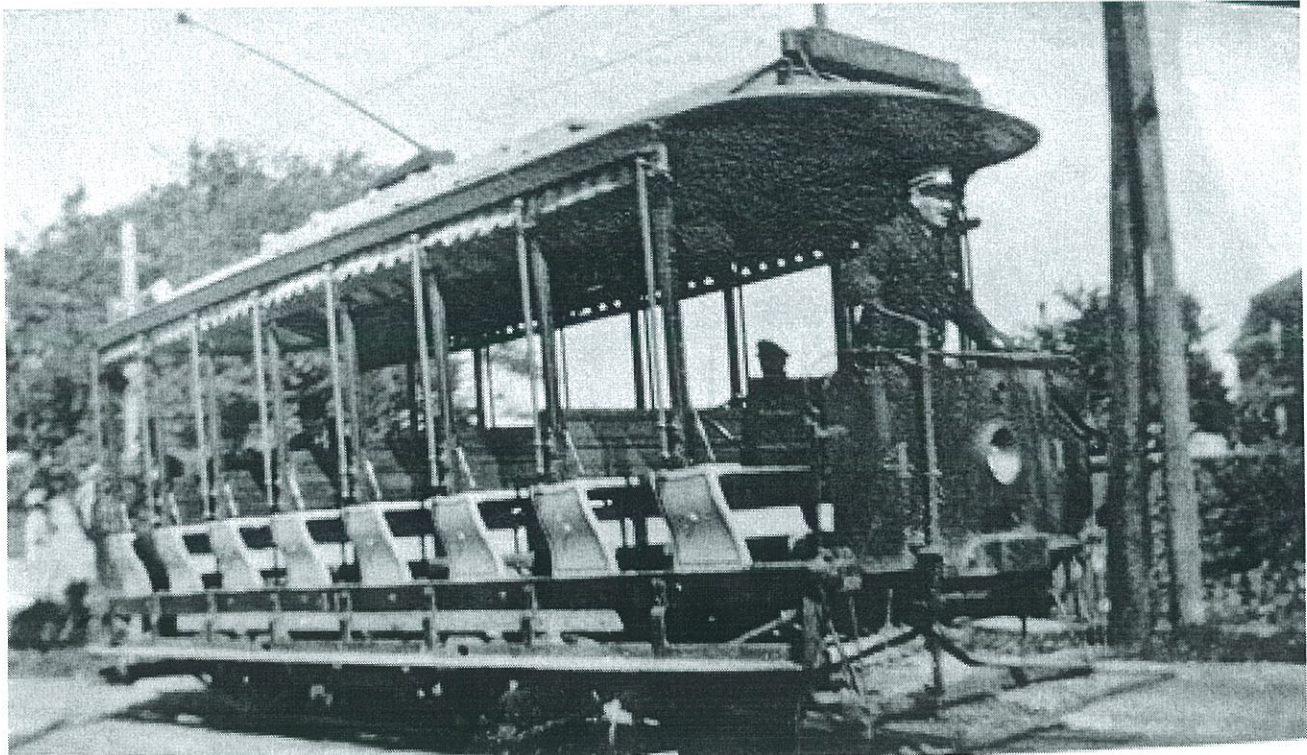


Northern terminus of the car tracks, near Prospect Street, with Lake Milo in the background. The white cloth sign reads "Disney A. M. E. Church / Annual Picnic / Wednesday Aug. 29th / Sand Beach / Admission 10¢ / Come." The initials stand for "African Methodist Episcopal." The year would have been 1894. (PH-66A-4, YCMA)





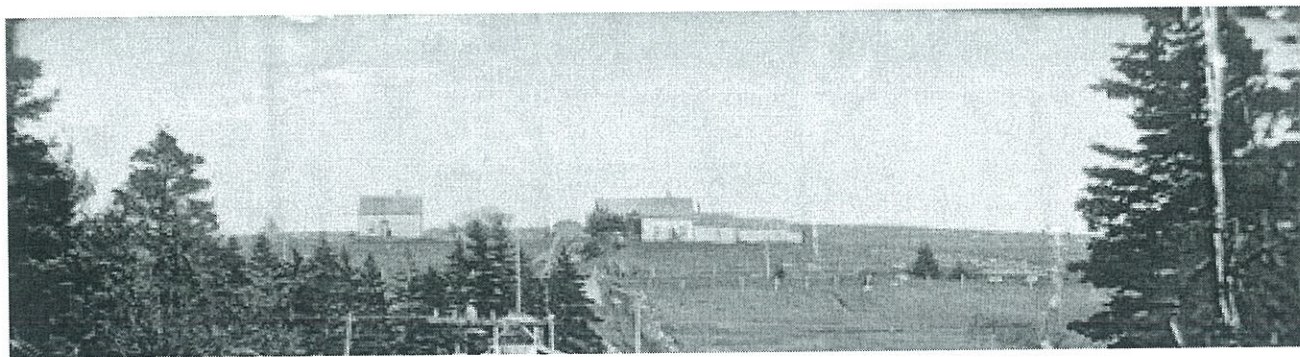
Northern terminus of the car tracks, near Prospect Street. (PH-66A-6, YCMA)

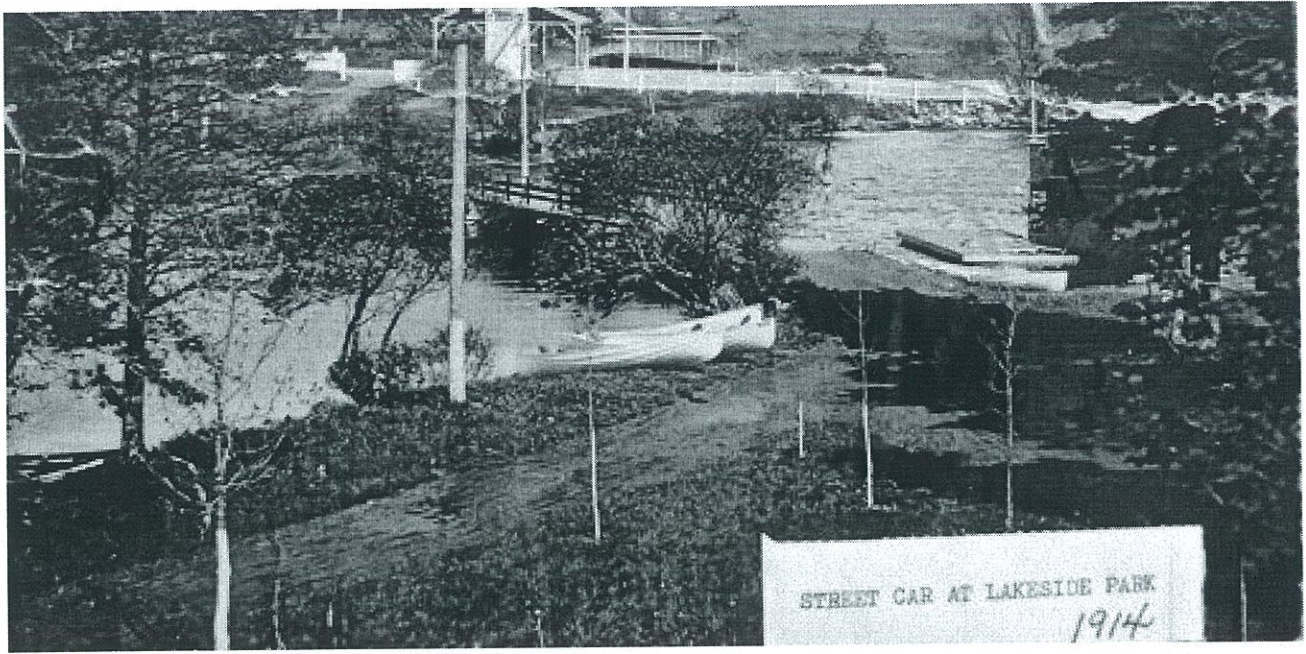


In 1905 two open cars were put into service for use in the summer months and in finer weather. (PH-66A-22, YCMA)



In 1907 the north end of the street railway track was extended from Prospect Street along the shoreline of Lake Milo to Lakeside Park at Murphy's Bridge. Here, an ox team is being overtaken by a street car on this extension. (PH-66A-26, YCMA)





Street car at Lakeside Park, Murphy's Bridge, 1914 (PH-66A-9, YCMA)

