

THE INTERURBAN RAILROAD

*Researched and compiled by the staff of the
Bartlesville Area History Museum
with the assistance of Mr. Rudy Geissler, 2011*



Additional Sources:

- *When Oklahoma Took The Trolley by Allison Chandler and Stephen D. Maguire, 1980*
- *Dewey Sentinel and Weekly Examiner newspapers (noted dates in publication)*
- *Bartlesville Examiner-Enterprise, August 10, 1972, Interurban Sparks Area Electrical Growth*
- *Special appreciation to Edgar Earl Weston, Area Historian, 11/14/1967 – 9/24/2002*
- *Special appreciation to Rudy Geissler, retired Engineer and BAHM research supporter*
- *Special appreciation to George Henshaw, BAHM photography supporter*

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BARTLESVILLE INTERURBAN RAILWAY

In August 1905 interest began for an electric railway from Dewey to Bartlesville. On July 18, 1906, a 49 year franchise was granted to the Bartlesville Interurban Railway Co. and one month later the Railway was reorganized and capitol stock was increased from \$5,000 to \$300,000. Joseph J. Curl was the President, George Woodring Vice President, William Higgins secretary and William Speck treasurer. Curl made a trip back east and reported upon his return that financing could be easily obtained for the proposed railway. However nothing happened and it was reorganized in May 1907—Joseph J. Curl remained President, George B. Keeler was Vice President, Frank M. Overlees was secretary and W. A. Smith became the treasurer. These named with Frank Phillips, William Speck and Joe Bartles made up the directorate. On June 10, 1907, the Interurban Electric Company formally accepted the franchise granted much earlier and construction began in December 1907. Steel for bridges over the Caney River and Coon Creek was brought to Bartlesville and three grading gangs went to work.



The Bartlesville Interurban Railway Visionaries

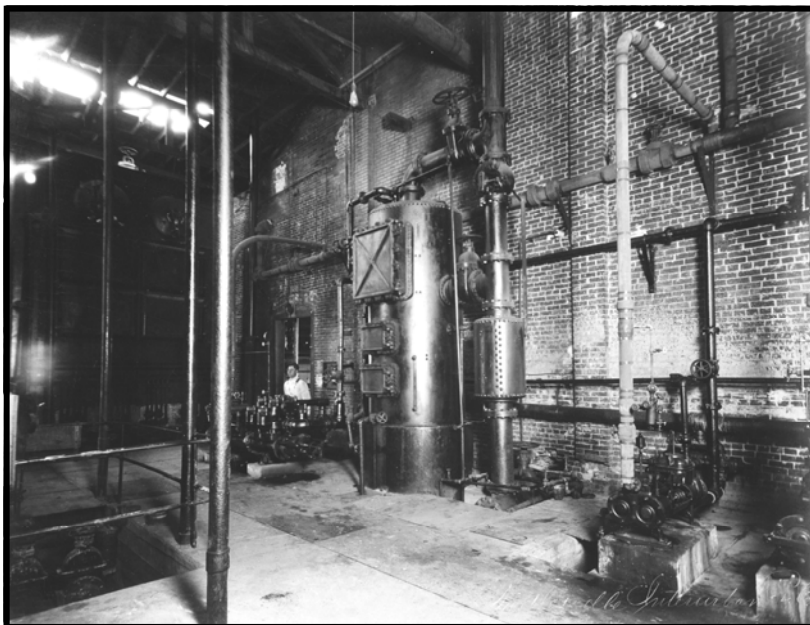
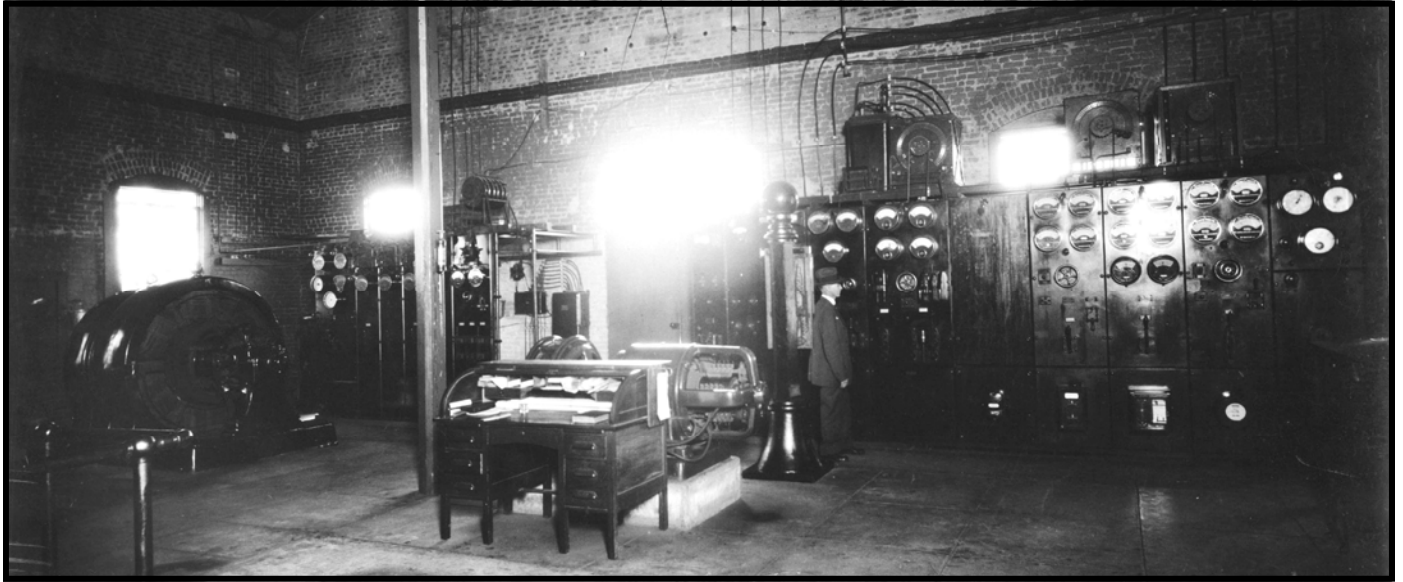
(L-R) George B. Keeler, Frank Overlees, Joseph J. Curl, Dr. George Woodring, Joseph Bartles and Frank Phillips

The terminal, brick powerhouse and car barns were soon under construction at the present site of Public Service Company on the northeast corner of Fourth Street and Comanche in Bartlesville. The bridge over the Caney River can still be noted by the piers in the river bed and bank just east of the Public Service operating building.



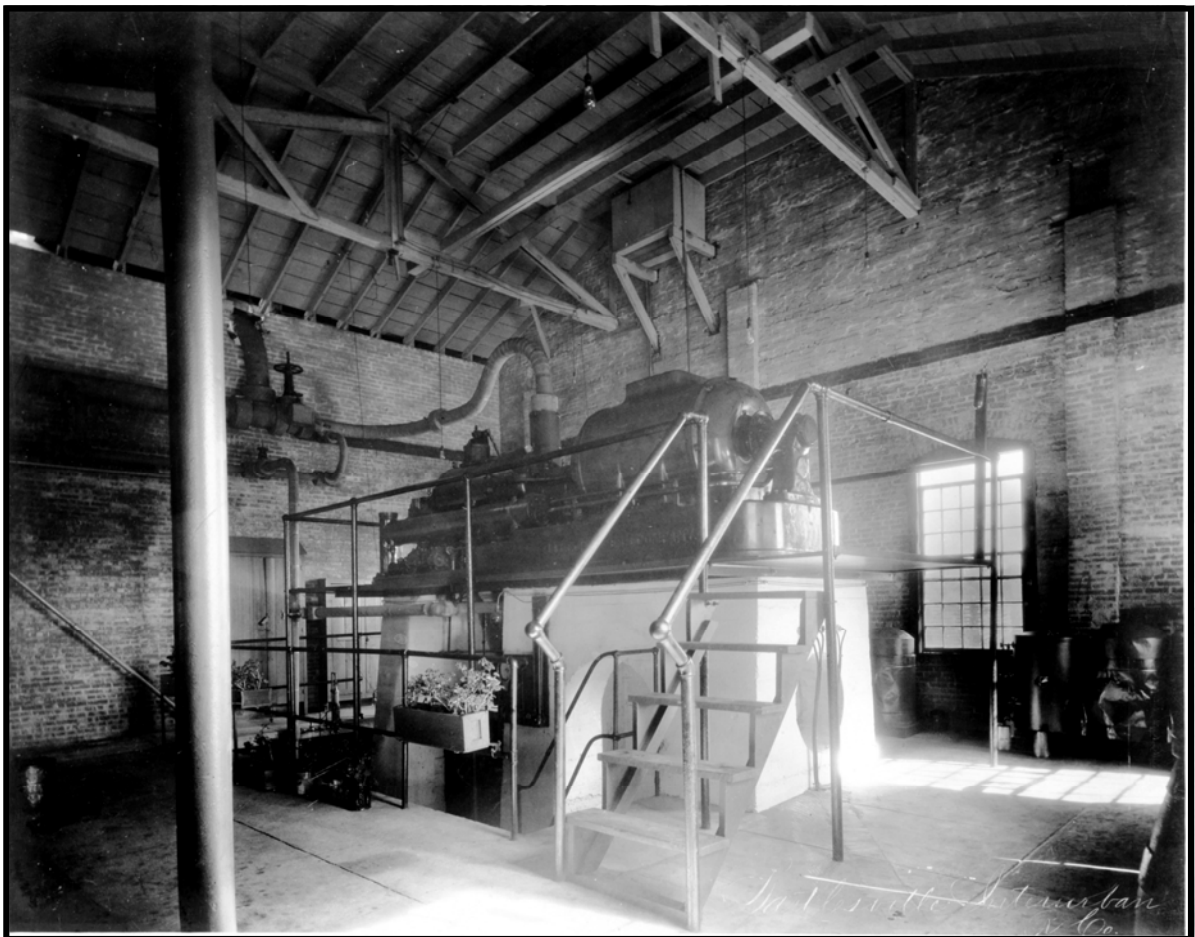
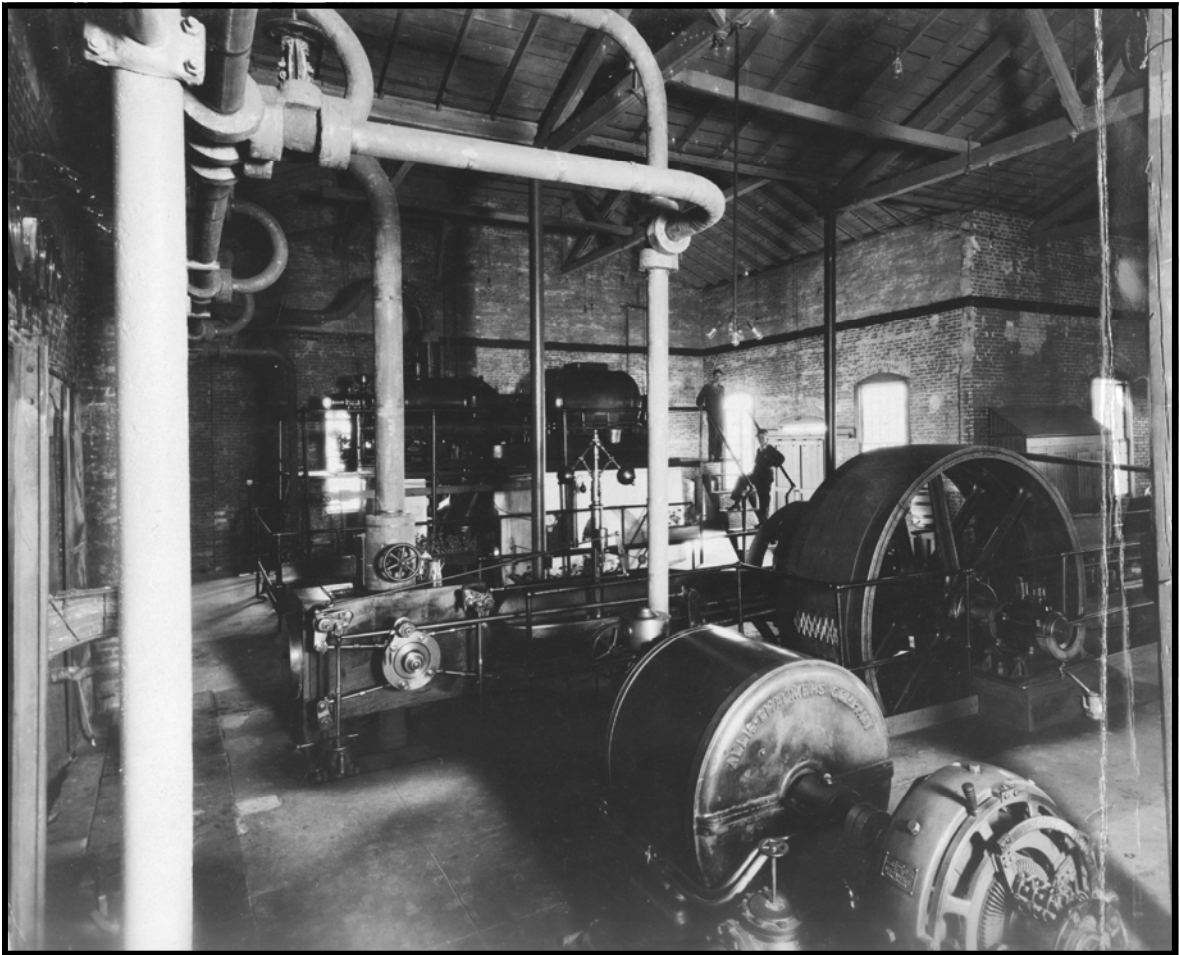
The terminal powerhouse and car barns at the present site of Public Service Company on the northeast side of 4th Street and Comanche. The street cars ran in both directions from the terminal—east across the Caney River through Tuxedo to Dewey with “switches or passes” at Little Bess Stop and Don Tyler Avenue—west on 4th Street to Cherokee Avenue, north on Cherokee to 3rd Street, west on 3rd Street to Mound Street (now Sunset Blvd.) then south to the smelters—the south branch started at 4th Street and Wyandotte, ran south on Wyandotte to 9th Street, west on 9th Street to Delaware, south on Delaware to 13th Street, west on 13th Street to Keeler Avenue north on Keeler Ave. to 8th Street, east on 8th Street to Dewey Avenue, and north on Dewey Ave. to 3rd Street.

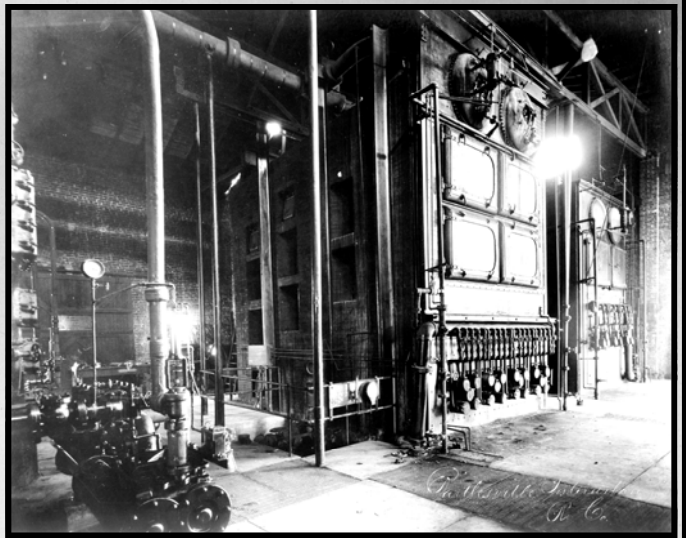
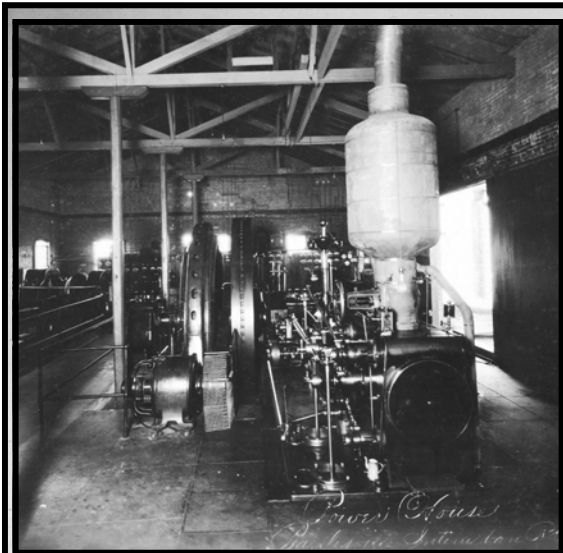
INTERURBAN POWERHOUSE TERMINAL



*The Dewey Sentinel reported
on June 9, 1911*

The Powerhouse is located on the Caney River at the eastern outskirts of Bartlesville, has large and powerful machinery such as one 1,250 and one 1,500 horse power engine which was installed about two years ago with direct connecting light apparatus of sufficient capacity to light the cities of Dewey and Bartlesville. One year ago \$20,000 was expended in lighting construction work for the purpose of supplying these towns. They have recently purchased a 400-horse power tabular boiler and are negotiating for another and will install a direct connected 500-K.W. engine to a cycle alternating-current appliance and condensing outfit to meet the requirements of the powerhouse. When completed this will mean the expenditure of an additional \$50,000 and the plant will then be one of the most complete to be found anywhere and will comply with every necessity!





Interurban Powerhouse Cooling Pond



On April 3, 1908, at 11:00 a.m. a “golden spike” was driven at Third Street and Johnstone Avenue, to commemorate the event of the official opening of the Interurban. Two thousand people witnessed each of the officer’s strike a blow to drive the spike; Joseph J. Curl, Mayor, C. Jones, Mayor of Dewey, L.E. Phillips, then President of the Commercial Club and J.J. Shea, Attorney of Bartlesville. After the ceremony the spike was given to Joseph J. Curl as a souvenir for his long hard work in bringing the railway to fruition.

Weekly Examiner, April 4, 1908—To Drive Interurban’s First Spike

Howard Sharp, the secretary of the Commercial Club, was asked last night how the arrangements for the celebration of the beginning of track laying on the Interurban Railway were progressing. “I understand that cars of steel rails have been received,” he said, “but the spikes are not here although they are on the way.”

“Will it be a gold spike – the one that is to be the first driven?” he was asked.

“The spike is being prepared and it will be on display a day or so before the celebration,” was the reply.

There is some rivalry for the distinction of driving the first spike. Among the persons who have been suggested are Mayor Beasley of Bartlesville; Mayor Jones of Dewey; Joe Bartles, President of the Dewey Commercial Club; Lee Phillips, President of the Bartlesville Commercial Club; Hon. Joseph J. Curl, President of the Interurban Company; and others. Another suggestion is that the mayors of Bartlesville and Dewey both be selected and that they alternate blows on the “golden first spike.”

The exact date of the celebration cannot be announced until all of the materials necessary to begin construction are here. Mr. Place, of the contracting construction firm, is out of the city today and his opinion of the time of commencing work could not be had.



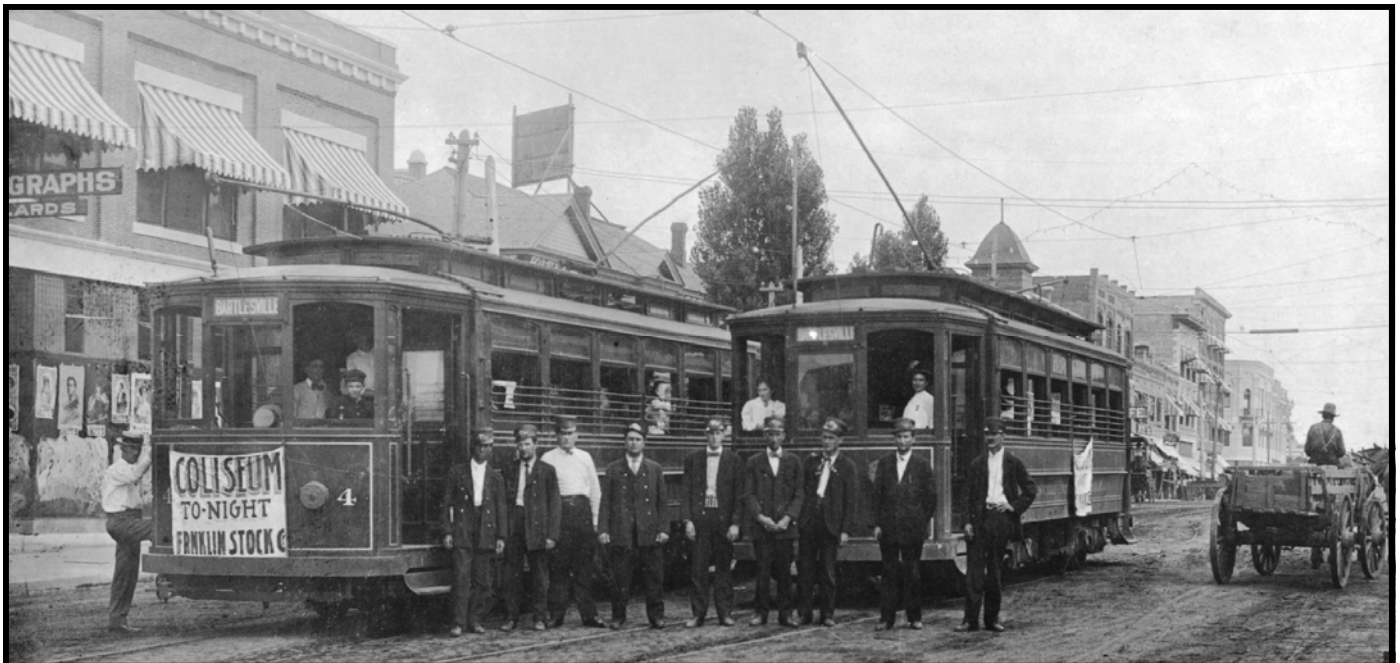
Interurban Construction on Third Street at Johnstone Avenue. Photo taken July 13, 1908.

Weekly Examiner, April 18, 1908—Unique Souvenir

The Owens Jewelry Company presented thirty scarf pins to different people in the city yesterday, the handiwork of Mr. Owens' son in the shape of a gold spike, as souvenirs of driving the first spike of the Interurban Railway yesterday morning. The work is unique and most excellently done and will be highly appreciated by those who were fortunate enough to become possessors of one of them. Young Mr. Owens is an expert in his line of work and an engraver on metals of high worth.

However a mile of track was yet to be laid and about one week later the first labor strike, or walkout, in the history of Bartlesville took place when ninety men employed by the line quit. They had been working ten hours a day for \$1.75 to \$2.00 per day and asked for an eight hour day. The strike ended the next day when some men went back to work and others were brought in from Kansas City to replace those who did not!

Labor, financial and organizational problems weren't the only ones which the Interurban had to cope with. The bridge crossing the Caney River washed out in March during flooding and in July the citizens complained that the "Interurban Lake" at Third and Johnstone was full of water and mud. The newspaper asked the city administration "to do something about this mud hole in the middle of the city."



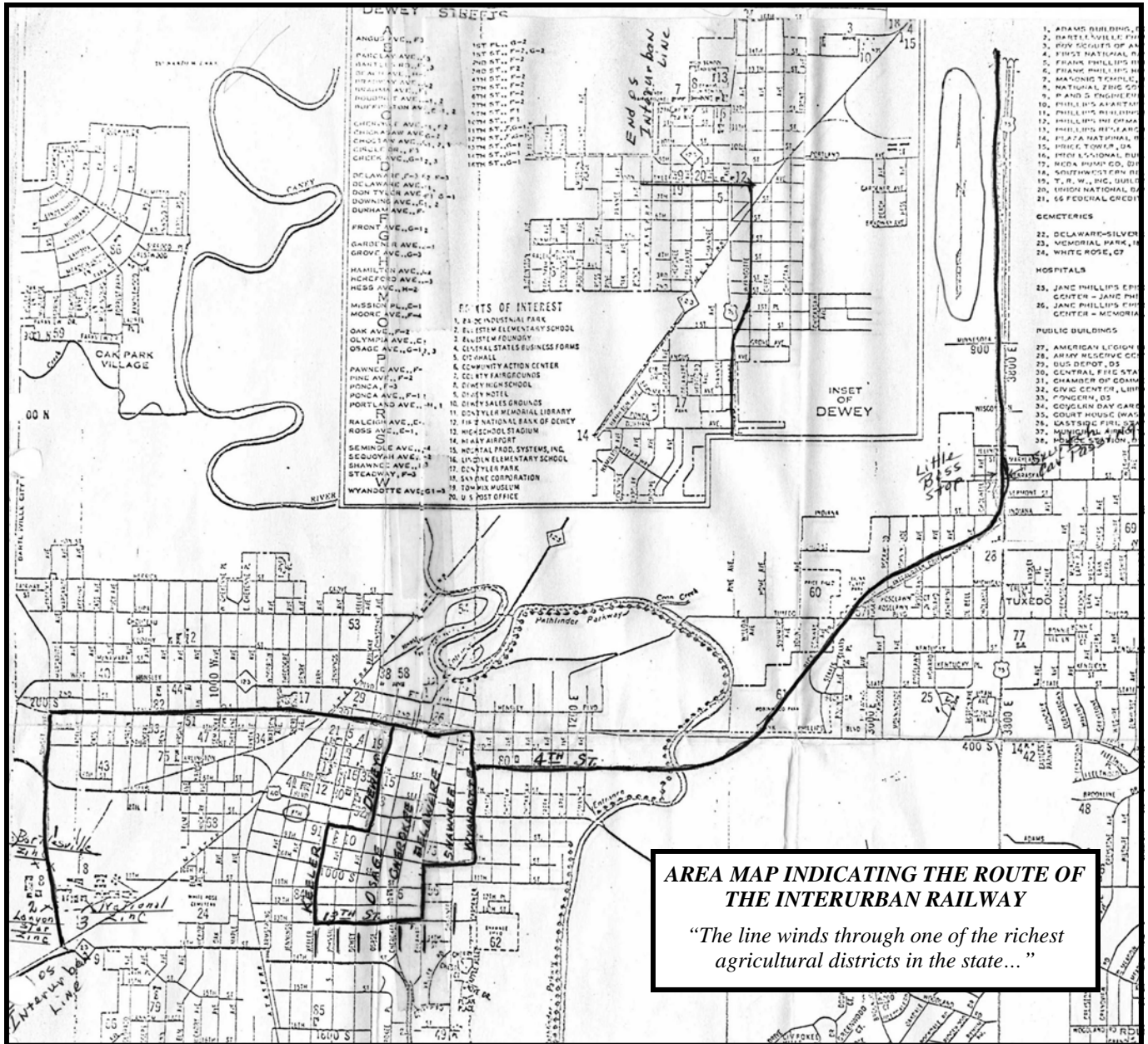
Bartlesville Interurban street cars passing at the "switch/pass" located on Third Street between Johnstone Avenue and Keeler Avenue, just west of the Rightway Hotel. The gentlemen are conductors and motormen. The corner of Johnstone and Third Street often became a "mud hole" which led the area to be known as "Interurban Lake."

Finally, two St. Louis Interurban Cars arrived June 22, 1908. The "regular size" for the run between Bartlesville and Dewey, with two smaller cars on order for the Bartlesville Smelter run and the "loop."

After more than three years of promises, promotion and hard work, the Interurban Street Railway started running cars between Bartlesville and Dewey on July 14, 1908. The cars ran in both directions from the terminal building at Fourth Street and Comanche. The route went east across the Caney River through Tuxedo to Dewey. "Little Bess" was the midway stop on the Interurban Railway to Dewey, where Washington Boulevard and Minnesota intersect. The fare changed from ten cents to twenty cents there for the full trip.

In Bartlesville, the route ran west on Fourth Street from the terminal to Cherokee, north on Cherokee to Third Street, west on Third to the Mound (now Sunset Blvd.) and then south to the smelters. The south broach or "loop" was opened in December 7, 1915. This started at

Fourth and Wyandotte and ran south on Wyandotte to Ninth Street, west on Ninth Street to Delaware Avenue, south on Delaware to 13th Street, west on 13th Street to Keeler Avenue, north on Keeler to Eighth Street, east on Eighth Street to Dewey Avenue and north on Dewey to Third Street. Half hour service was maintained on the loop route.



Theo Barlas' Candy Store on Third Street, across from *Parrett's Dry Goods* (now *Two Sisters*), was the Interurban waiting room. Positioned at the Third Street switch/pass, the Candy Store was a pleasant place to purchase candies, confections and cigars.

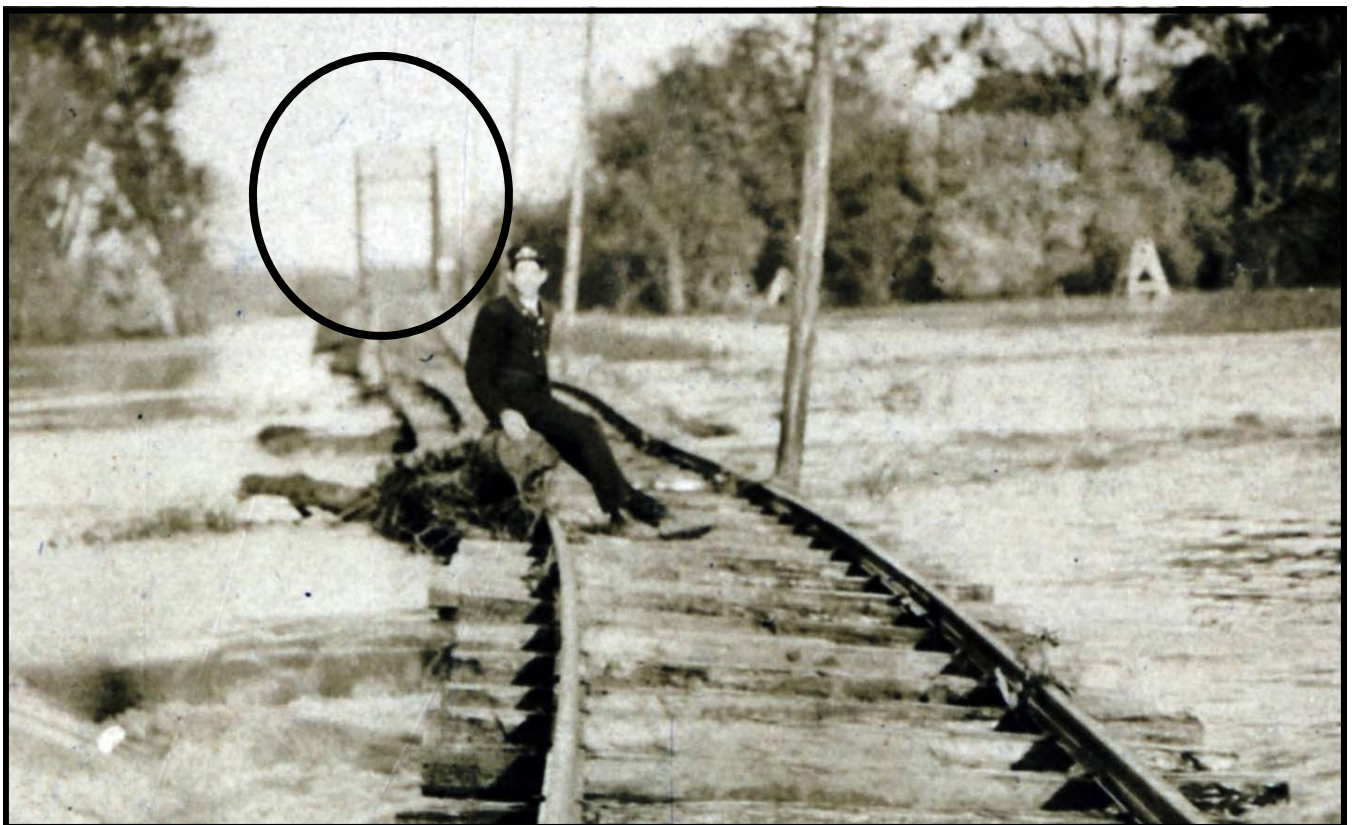
Remnants of the tracks are still visible at many locations within the city of Bartlesville, especially on Keeler Avenue between Eighth and Ninth Streets—the street is cracked where the Interurban Railway tracks rest under the pavement.

The opening of the Interurban between Bartlesville and Dewey and the smelters on the southwest side of Bartlesville had an enormous impact on the entire area. Lots in Tuxedo Park went on sale immediately, and work on an “Electric Amusement Park” began there. Everything looked rosy, but in December the news noted “the flooding of the Caney reduced the Interurban through the river bottoms to a wrecked and tangled mass,” however this was repaired quickly.

INTERURBAN TRACK FLOODING



The circle indicates the Interurban Bridge that crossed the Caney River east of the Interurban Powerhouse Terminal at Fourth and Comanche. Since much of the track was laid in low lands, Interurban travel was impossible during flooding.



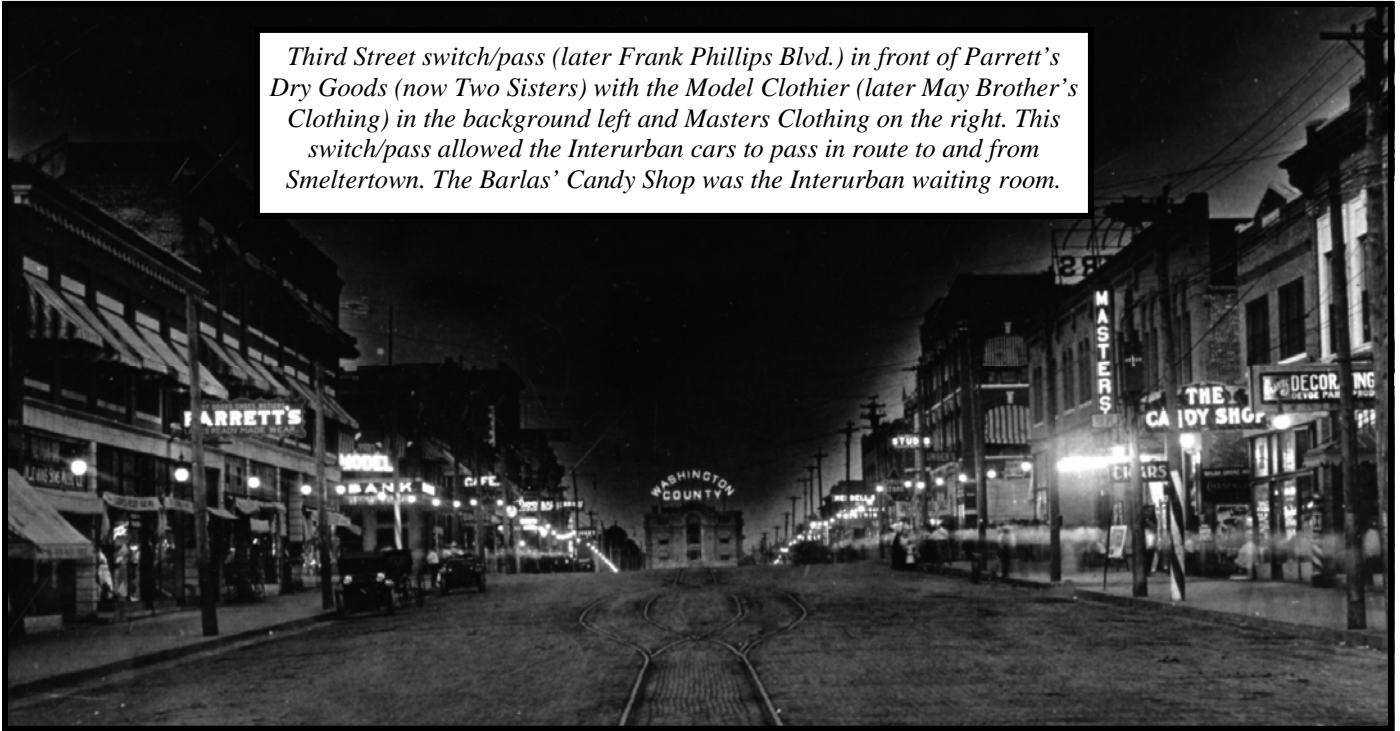


A Bartlesville Interurban Trolley Car traveling on partially submerged tracks, photo taken April 29, 1912.



*Bartlesville Flooding on October 24, 1908
Washout beyond the Interurban Bridge, east of the Interurban Powerhouse Terminal at Fourth and Comanche.*

Third Street switch/pass (later Frank Phillips Blvd.) in front of Parrett's Dry Goods (now Two Sisters) with the Model Clothier (later May Brother's Clothing) in the background left and Masters Clothing on the right. This switch/pass allowed the Interurban cars to pass in route to and from Smelertown. The Barlas' Candy Shop was the Interurban waiting room.



All Aboard

Take a Ride on the New CITY LOOP CAR

Beginning at 6 o'clock this morning, we will operate a City Car between our Switch on Third Street and the Corner of Thirteenth Street and Keeler Avenue, via Wyandotte Ave.

Cars will run until midnight.

Cars will make this round-trip three times an hour.

Cars leave 13th and Keeler on the even hours, twenty minutes after and twenty minutes to the hour.

Cars stop on near side of street.

Pay as you enter.

Have fare ready.

Bartlesville Interurban Ry. Co.



Trolley car seats were constructed to flip forward and back depending on the direction of travel.



Typical motorman controls at the head end of the trolley car.

**July 10, 1915—A PARK EAST OF CITY
One Is Being Fitted Up Along the Interurban Track**

Bartlesville people are to have a place of amusement this summer. Work has been started in fitting up a park just east of the city on the site of the old Tuxedo Park, just north of the first switch along the Interurban track. It is but a short distance across the Caney River.

Announcement was made today that the amusement park to be located there is being financed by local men, although the identity of the men has not been made public. A merry-go-round, shooting gallery, moving picture show and dancing pavilion will be some of the attractions. Later a swimming pool and a place for boating is to be fitted up. It is also planned later in the season to have band concerts and a display of fireworks out there once a week. When the park is in operation the Interurban company will change its car service between here and the park, and it is probable a fifteen minute service will be installed.

PROSPECT PARK

GREAT BALLOON ASCENSION

WITH A SHOWER OF
GOLD

OVER BARTLESVILLE AND DEWEY

On Monday and Tuesday, August 23d and 24th, balloons will be sent up from different parts of the city. Attached to each of these balloons will be tickets. These tickets will be distributed all over the city, releasing themselves from the balloons and scattering in mid-air like a flock of birds. Be sure to get yours as it falls. All tickets ending in 5 (five) are good for admission to any concession on the ground on

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 25th

Admitting the holder to a

FREE Merry-Go-Round.....	FREE
FREE DANCE.....	FREE
FREE SWIM.....	FREE
FREE Admission to All Shows....	FREE

KEEP YOUR TICKET

They are numbered, and at 9 p. m., August 25th, a number will be drawn at the park. The holder of the lucky number will be given

\$5.00 IN GOLD

**July 15, 1915—PARK
OPENS NEXT WEEK
Summer Resort East of City
Will Attract Large Crowds**

Some time the latter part of next week Tuxedo Park, the new summer resort, east of the city, will open and a record crowd, that will tax the cars of the Interurban Company, will be on hand. A set program is being arranged which will furnish plenty of enjoyment for the hundreds of people who will be on hand with the opening events of the evening.

E. W. Wise, who will have charge of the park, stated today that at least four attractions—merry-go-round, a shooting gallery, dancing pavilion and refreshment stands—would be ready on the opening night. Later, a "movie" theatre, swimming pool and other attractions are to be added. The summer resort will remain in operation right up to the time snow flies and there may be attractions held there during the course of the winter.

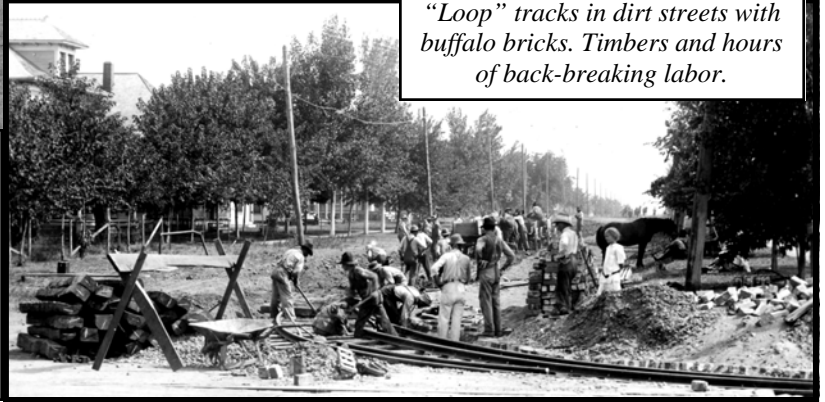


The Interurban Railway traveled down Third Street, then turned south on Cherokee Avenue in front of the Chastain-Toalson Lumber Company.

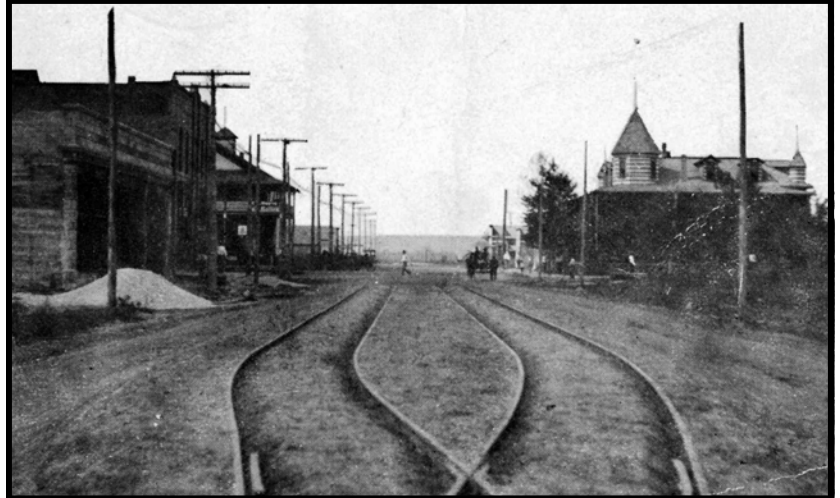
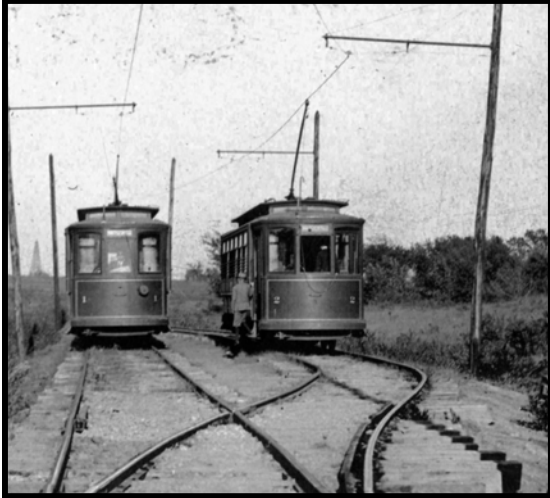


Constructing the Interurban "Loop" tracks in dirt streets with buffalo bricks. Timbers and hours of back-breaking labor.

The south broach or "loop" started at 4th and Wyandotte and ran south on Wyandotte to 9th Street, west on 9th Street to Delaware Avenue, south on Delaware to 13th Street, west on 13th to Keeler Avenue, north on Keeler to 8th Street, east on 8th to Dewey Avenue and north on Dewey to 3rd Street. Half hour service was maintained on this loop route. Opened for travel December 1915.



SWITCH/PASSES



Left is the Tuxedo Switch/Pass called "Little Bess Pass," where Washington Boulevard and Minnesota intersect. Little Bess was the midway stop on the Interurban Railway to Dewey. The fare changed from ten cents to twenty cents there for the full trip. The photo on the right is the Dewey-Don Tyler Switch/Pass.

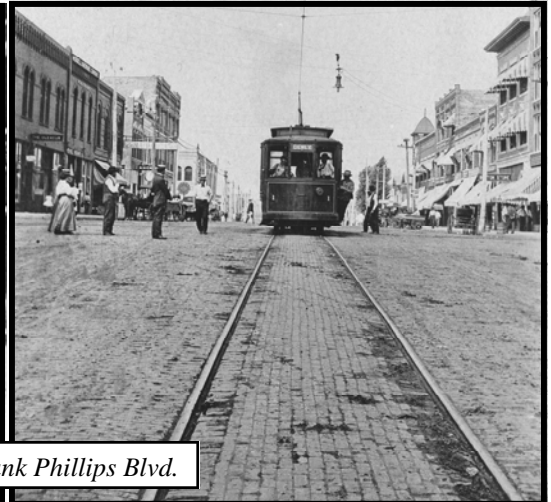
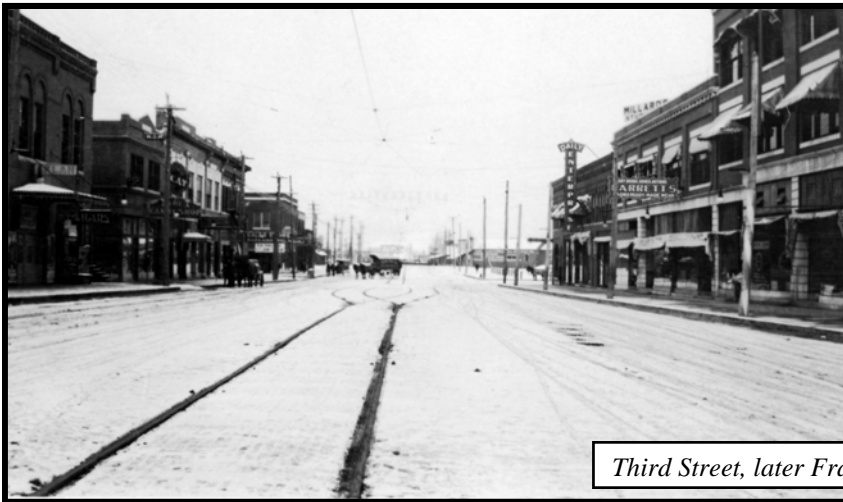


Third Street switch/pass (later Frank Phillips Blvd.) in front of Parretts Dry Goods with the Model Clothier (later May Brother's Clothing) in the background. This switch allowed the Interurban cars to pass in route to and from Smelertown (National Zinc, Bartlesville Zinc and Lanyon-Star Smelting Company—at that time the largest smelting company in the world).

Men gathered in the street are reportedly awaiting the score of the sixth and final game of the World Series played on October 15, 1917; Chicago vs. New York. Chicago won the game 4-2 and the series 4-2. Since there was no radio or television reporting, the scores were relayed by telegraph or telephone. Fans in this photo were getting the score by innings as they were posted in the window of the Daily Enterprise. The Daily Enterprise was one of Bartlesville's newspapers at the time and was located at 120 West Third Street.



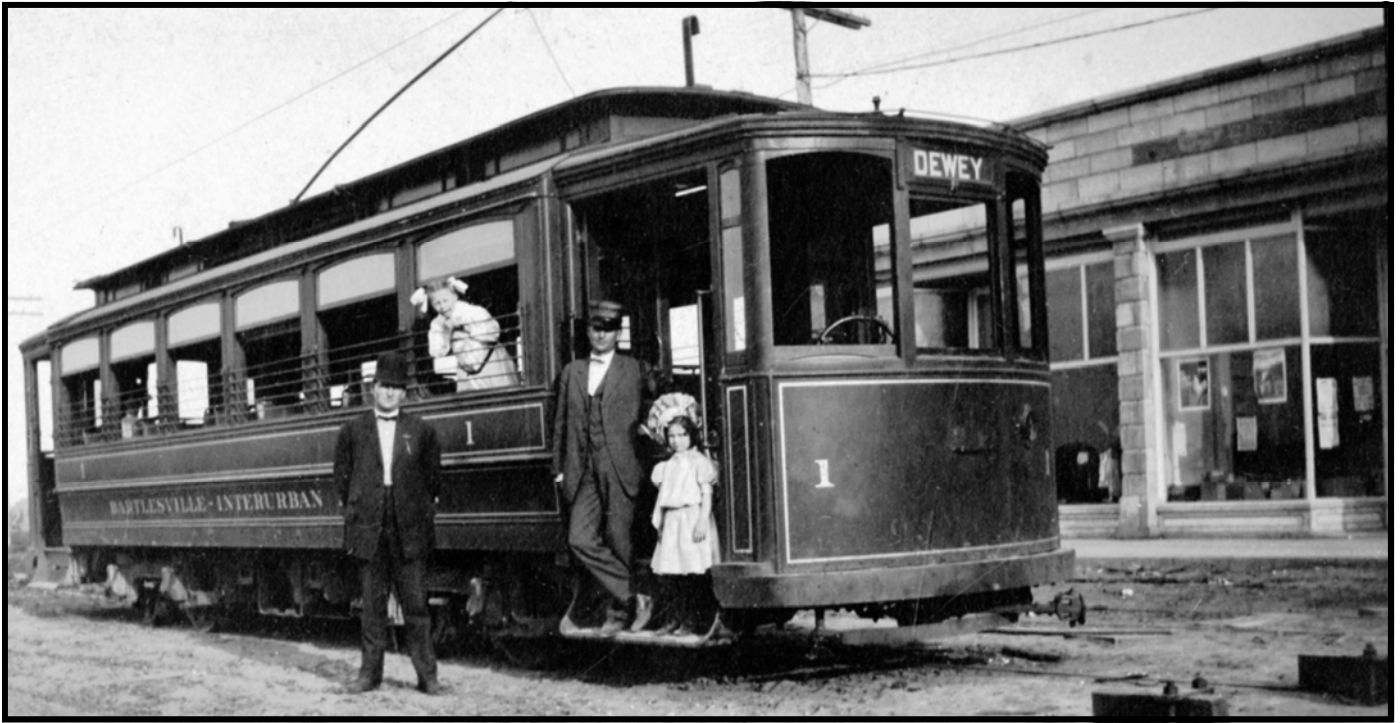
Bartlesville snow storm, February 12, 1920.



Third Street, later Frank Phillips Blvd.

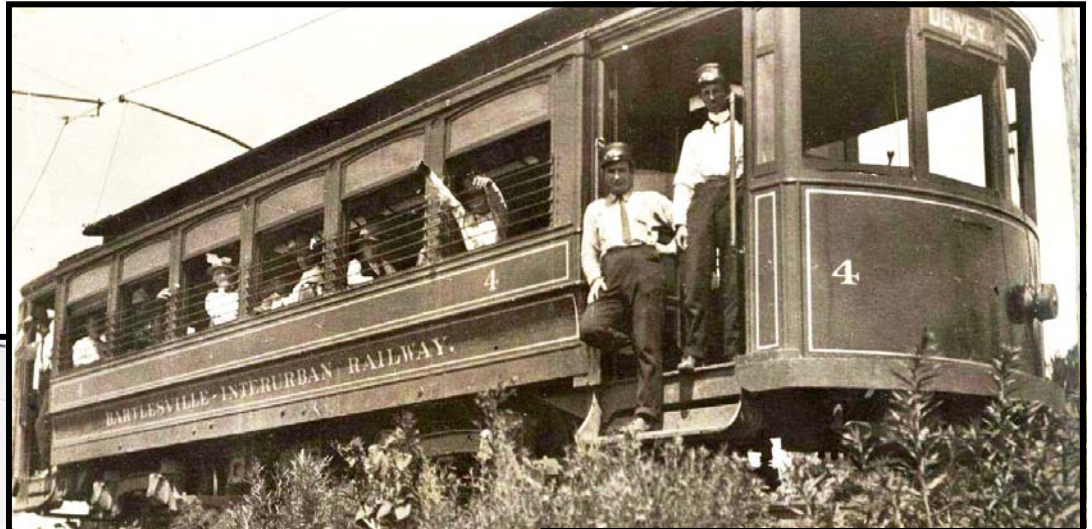


Looking East down Third Street. Note the various methods of transportation: Two Interurban Railway Cars, a Model T Ford and a horse-drawn two-seater spring wagon.

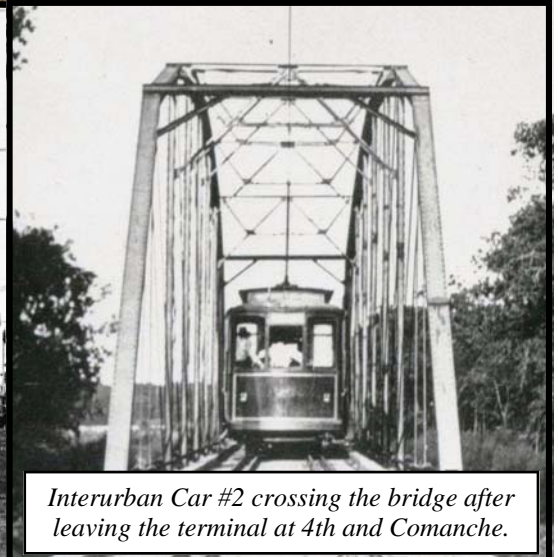


Bartlesville Interurban Railway Car #1—note the car is either headed to Dewey or in Dewey as indicated by the destination sign which was illuminated and visible from the interior of the car as well.

Right
Interurban Car #4,
headed to Dewey



*Third Street between
Keeler and Johnstone*



*Interurban Car #2 crossing the bridge after
leaving the terminal at 4th and Comanche.*

During its dozen years of operation, the Interurban held an important place in the economic and romantic life of Washington County and even of towns in Kansas. Oilmen and field workers could commute to the ends of the line and hire rigs for trips deeper into the oil fields. Smelter workers and employees of the Dewey Portland Cement plant could visit the growing city on the southside of the Caney River. A round trip took forty-five minutes.



The Interurban served its romantic role when young couples living north of Dewey discovered it was a big date to drive a rig to Dewey, take the Interurban to Bartlesville, see a show or visit friends, ride back on the "Electric Cars," pick up their horse and buggy and be home by midnight.

The Interurban enjoyed its peak economic period during World War I, when business and industries were experiencing a tremendous boom in this area. Before the Interurban finally suspended operation on July 15, 1920, more than 25 men had been conductors and motormen.

John Franklin, a long time employee, took the last car into the barn near the Power Plant.

Before his death, Ed Miller recalled taking a car across the bridge over the Caney River when the water rose a foot inside the car and no one knew whether they would make it or not.

L. G. Coleman was the first manager of the Interurban. Mike Irelan succeeded him, and later came to Bartlesville from NY to become President of Cities Service Oil Company.



Beginning of the First Christian Church of Dewey, Indian Territory, taken in 1907.

Advertisement posted on the side of the Bartlesville Interurban at Dewey, 8th Street, now Don Tyler Blvd.

Most of the rails remain in the streets along its route, covered by resurfacing over the years. In Dewey the rails were taken up during World War II when scrap was so desperately needed.

The Bartlesville Interurban Company was chartered in 1905 and construction began in 1907. The power plant was completed in 1909 with a cost of \$25,000 and the company sold excess electricity to Bartlesville and Dewey as a source of revenue.

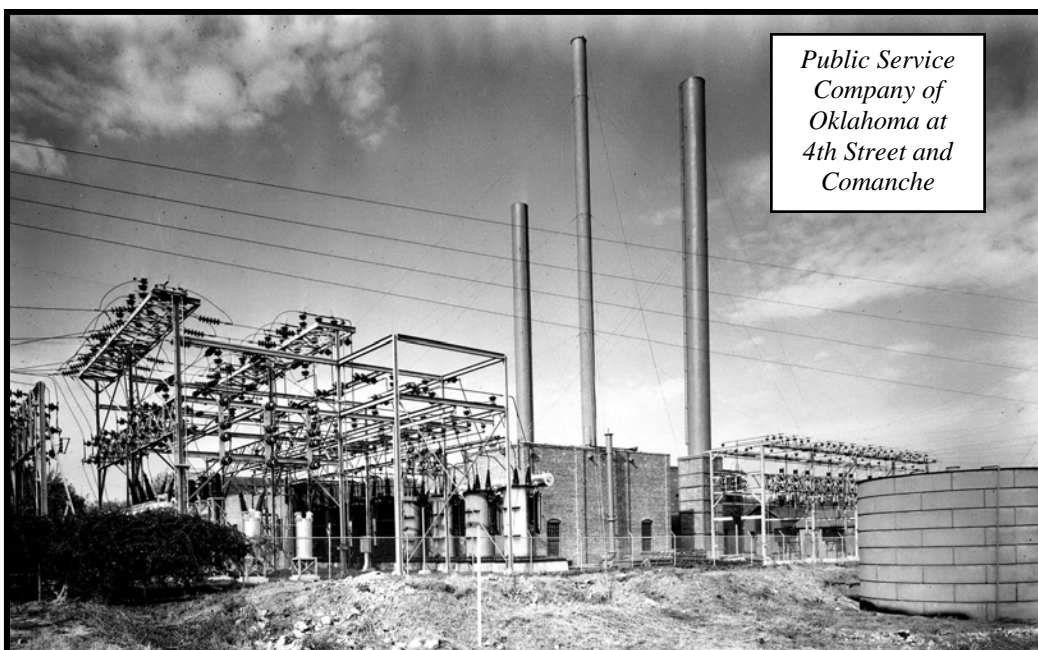
In 1912, both the power and the interurban business were sold to the Henry L. Doherty Co. of New York, which eventually put the company into the Cities Service family.

By 1916 there were eight cars and a total of 10.1 miles of trackage. The business was turned over to the Bartlesville Gas & Electric in 1919 with an all time high of eleven cars in service which were all purchased from the St. Louis Car Company.

The decision to abandon the Interurban rail service came after approval of the Oklahoma Corporation Commission. The ten-mile Interurban system linking Bartlesville and the suburbs of Tuxedo and Dewey lasted 12 years and one day. All cars returned to the car

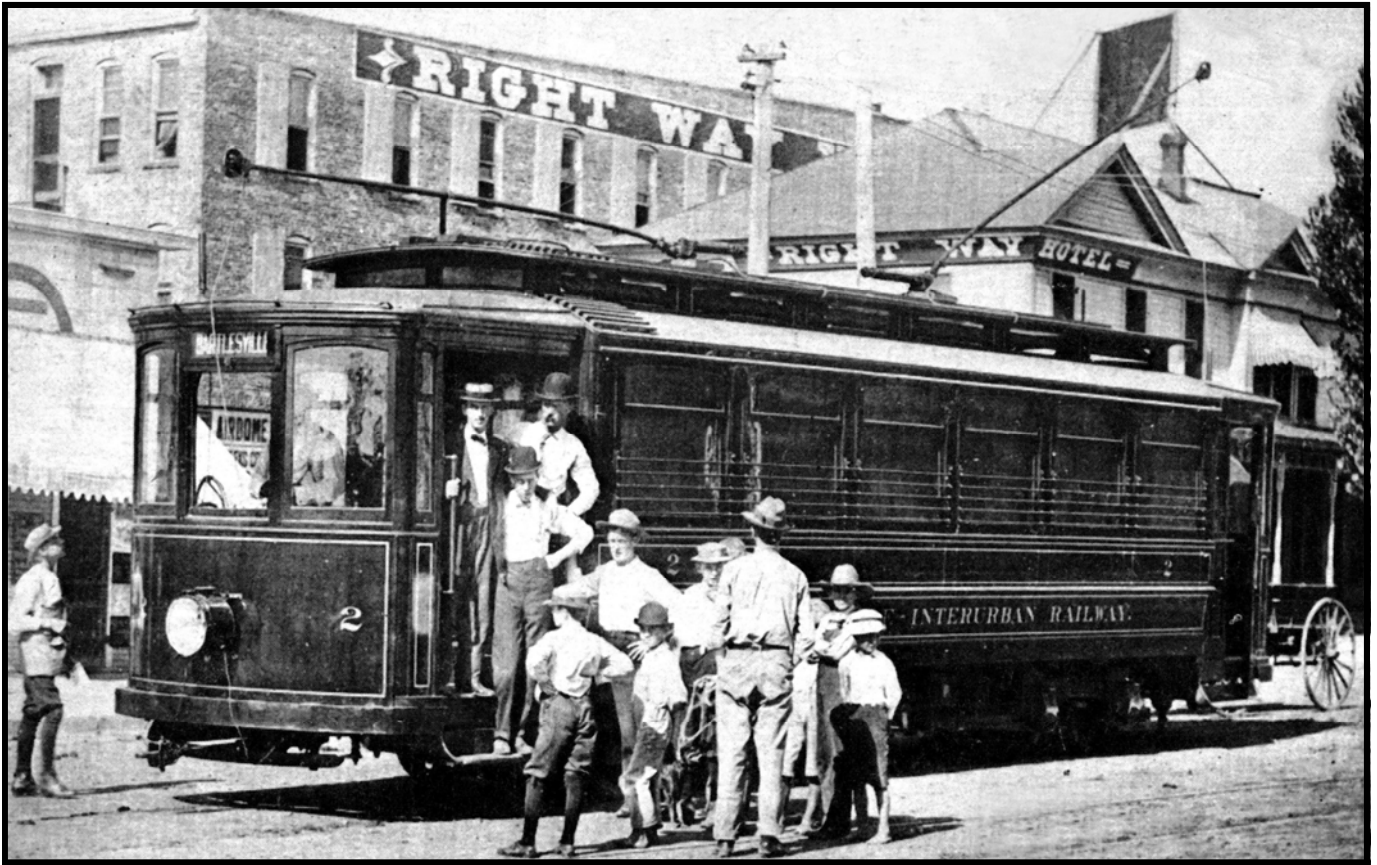
house on East Fourth Street on July 15, 1920, never to run again.

In 1928 the Bartlesville Gas and Electric property was sold to Southwestern Gas and Electric Company of Shreveport, LA, who leased the system to Public Service Company. The Bartlesville system generated its own power and was isolated from other electrical companies. In an effort to lower the cost of operations, PSC purchased the system two years later and plans began to tie the Bartlesville System into the companies n o r t h e a s t e r n Oklahoma electric network the rest is Public Service Company of Oklahoma history.

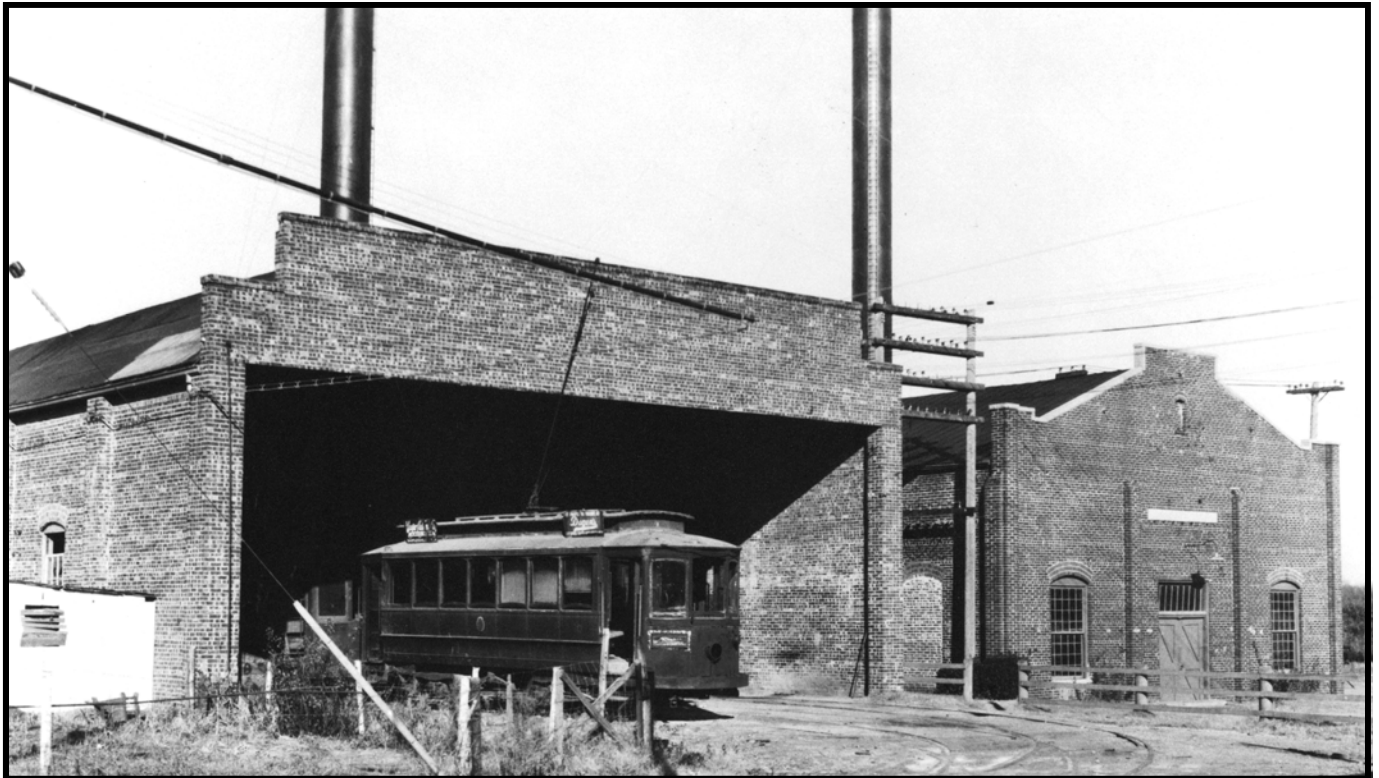


Public Service Company of Oklahoma at 4th Street and Comanche





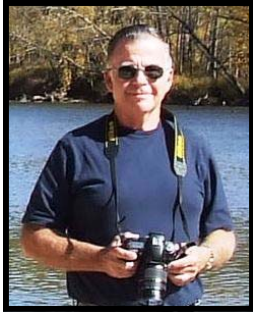
Interurban #2 car in front of the Right Way Hotel (later the home of May Brothers) at the corner of Third Street (later Frank Phillips Blvd.) and Johnstone Avenue. Visible in the back ground is the 1904 Annex building.



The Bartlesville Gas and Electric Company Interurban Powerhouse with an Interurban street car leaving the terminal barn. The street cars traveled east over the Interurban Bridge to cross the Caney River to Tuxedo and Dewey locations and west from the terminal to the "south loop," downtown Bartlesville and the Smelters. The Interurban Powerhouse terminal later became the home of Public Service Company located at 4th Street and Comanche.

BARTLESVILLE INTERURBAN RAILWAY (BIR) OPERATIONS

By: Rudy Geissler

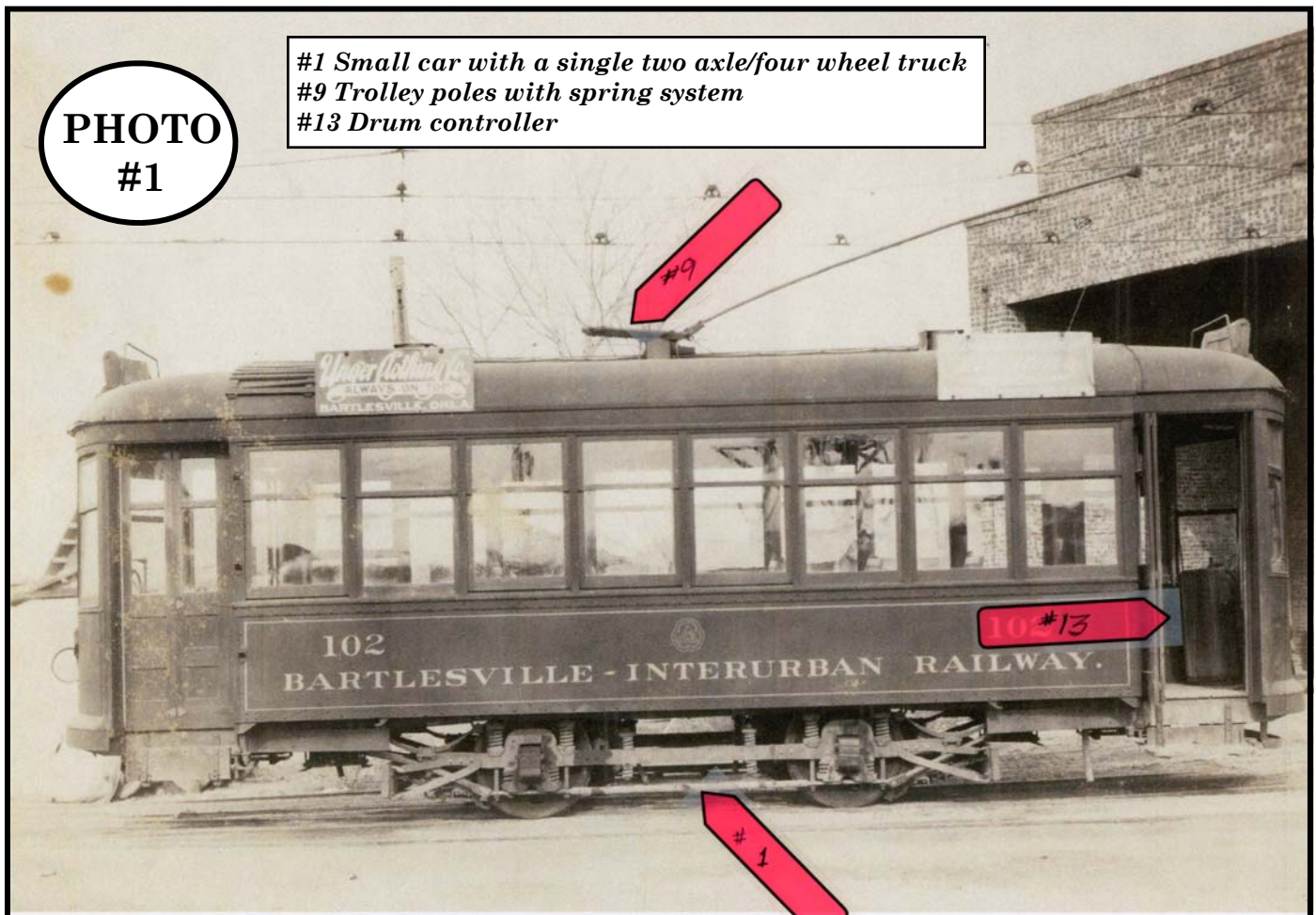


Mr. Rudy Geissler is a History Hero at the Bartlesville Area History Museum. He loves to research area history and was a major contributor towards the development, research and photography of the "Bartlesville Heritage Trail Downtown District" guide booklet that received a 2010 Annual Statewide Historic Preservation Conference award. Although much history has been gathered about the Bartlesville Interurban Railway, Rudy brings to light the technical side of the operation:

Car Design and Construction:

As with many interurban and street car systems, the BIR route layout was basically a point to point route that did not have any provisions for turning the cars around. As a result, all of the BIR cars were equipped so that they could be operated from either end of the car and the passenger seats were equipped with bi-position seat backs that would be flipped at the end of the line by the conductor so that the passengers would always be facing forward in direction of the travel of the car.

The BIR used two different sized cars, a single two axle/four wheel truck equipped small car (*see photo 1, item #1*) and a large car equipped with two - two axle/four wheel trucks (*see*



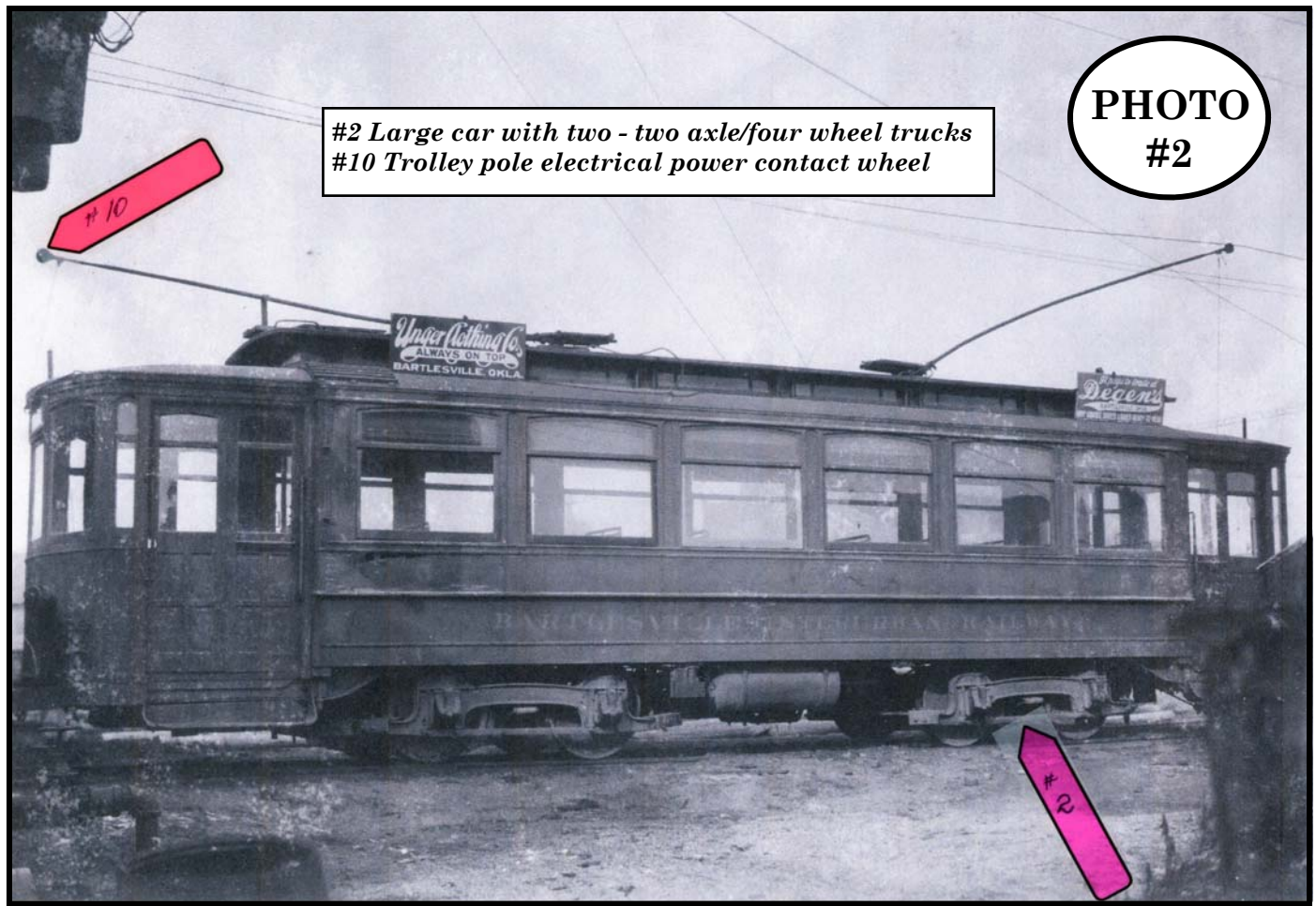


photo 2, item #2). The large cars were numbered beginning with “1” while the smaller cars were numbered beginning with “101.”

Although all of the BIR cars, both the small as well as the large, were of steel construction, all cars were equipped with a “canvas over wood” veneer roof covering over the car’s steel roof. This type of construction was used for many years for electric powered street cars and interurban cars to help prevent an electrical short circuit in case the overhead mounted power feed wire broke and fell on top of a car roof.

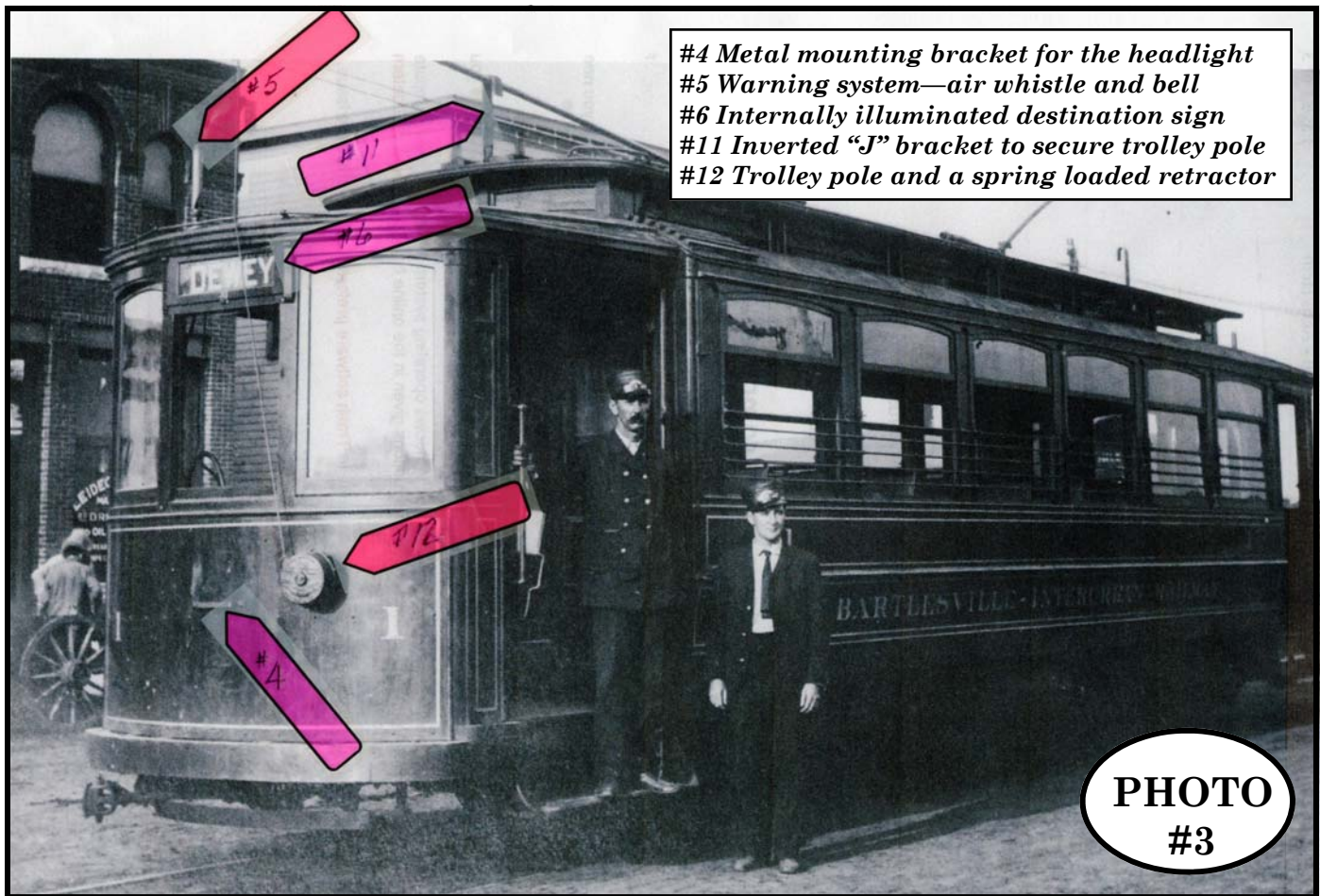
The cars had a single removable/portable headlight (**see photo 4, item #3**) that was mounted and connected by the motorman to the front end of the car (in direction of travel) onto a metal mounting bracket (**see photo 3, item #4**). At the end of route, the motorman would disconnect the headlight and remount/connect it at the opposite end of the car for the next trip.

The cars were equipped with two types of audible warning devices; a bell as well as an air whistle (**see photo 3, item #5**) for warning the public of the approaching car.

Each car end had an internally illuminated destination sign (**see photos 3 and 4, item #6**). These signs provided a white on black background heavy paper within the sign box that was mounted on crank equipped rollers so that the destination that the car was headed to could be selected for display. Destinations displayed included: “BARTLESVILLE,” “DEWEY” and “SMELTERTOWN.”

Car Propulsion:

Power for the cars was received from an overhead supported catenary power feed wire commonly called a trolley wire (**see photo 5, item #7**) via a trolley pole (**see photo 5, item**



#4 Metal mounting bracket for the headlight
 #5 Warning system—air whistle and bell
 #6 Internally illuminated destination sign
 #11 Inverted “J” bracket to secure trolley pole
 #12 Trolley pole and a spring loaded retractor

PHOTO
 #3

#8) that was mounted on the roof of the cars, the small cars only had one trolley pole while the large cars had two (*see photo 1 and 2*).

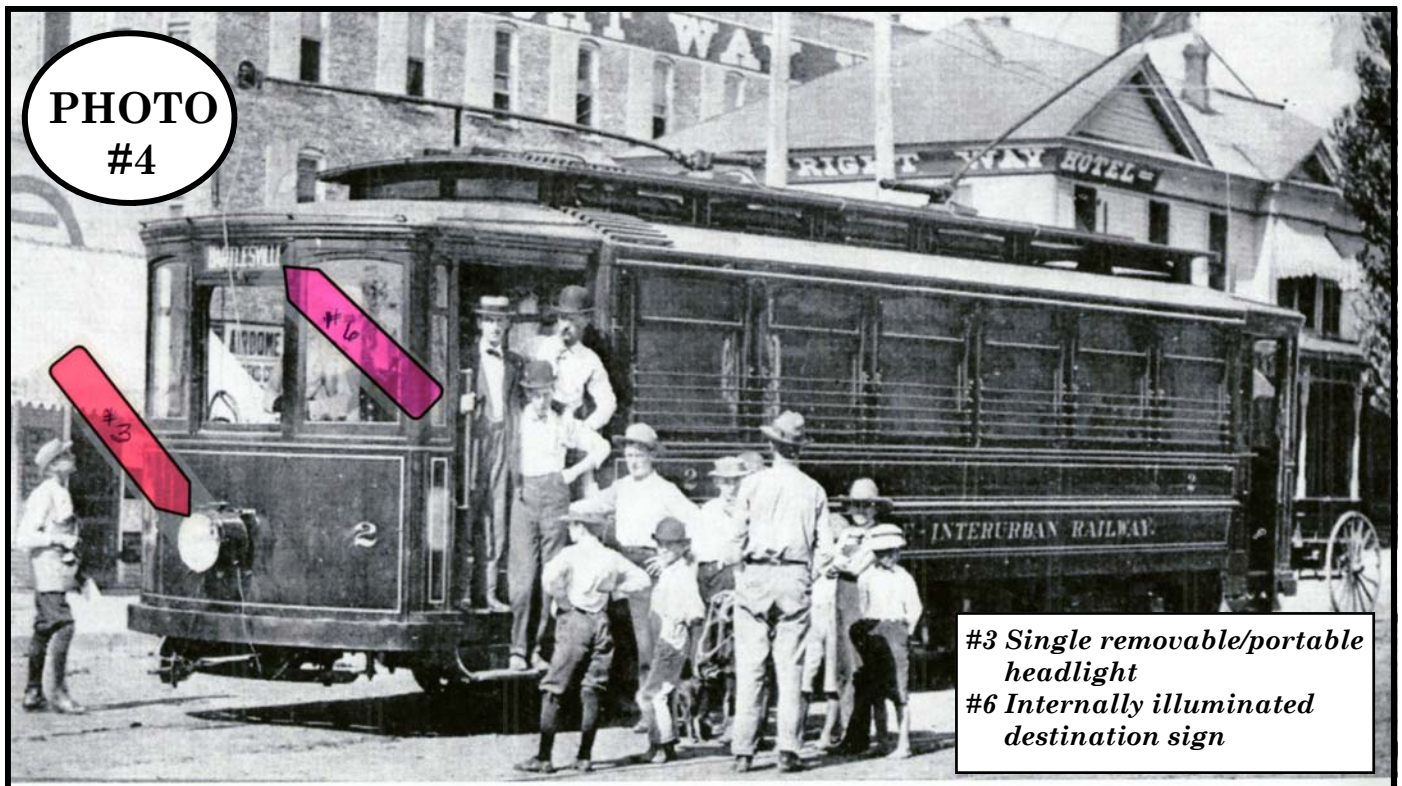
The trolley poles were equipped with a system of springs (*see photo 1, item #9*) that assured that the trolley pole contact wheel (*see photo 2, item #10*) mechanically and electrically engaged the overhead power feed wire so that electrical power would flow to the car traction motors’ related controls and eventually to the traction motors for propulsion of the car.

Note that the trolley pole that actively engaged the overhead power feed wire was also in a trailing position facing the rear of the car. Thus, on the large cars with two trolley poles, the front pole was always in a lowered/captured position (*see photo 3, item #11*) using an inverted “J” type of bracket.

Lowering and raising the trolley pole was accomplished by the motorman at the end of the route by pulling or releasing a rope attached to the trolley pole and a spring loaded retractor (*see photo 3, item #12*).

Since the small cars only had one trolley pole, the base of the trolley pole and related spring assembly was mounted on a pivot that allowed the motorman to change the trolley pole position for the travel direction by lowering the pole with the rope and walking to the opposite end of the car where he would release the rope to permit the trolley pole to re-engage the overhead power feed wire.

Once the electrical voltage was brought into the car via the trolley pole, it was controlled with a device called a drum controller (*see photo 1, item #13*) that was manually operated by the motorman. The drum controllers were positioned at the ends of the car at the motorman’s standing work position. By rotating a horizontal control lever, various internal contact switches within the drum controller in conjunction with other electrical components



Also included in the drum control was the forward/reverse directional switching level that would change the flow of voltage to the traction motors resulting in the change of direction of travel of the car.

The motorman's control station also included the control for the air brakes used to stop the car as well as other devices for the control and operation of the car.

Operation of the Cars:

The cars were operated with a crew of two, a conductor and a motorman.

The conductor was the individual that managed the overall operation of the car as well as collecting fares from the passengers and the loading and unloading of passengers during each stop. He also assisted with the changing of the position of the seat backs prior to the next trip in the opposite direction.

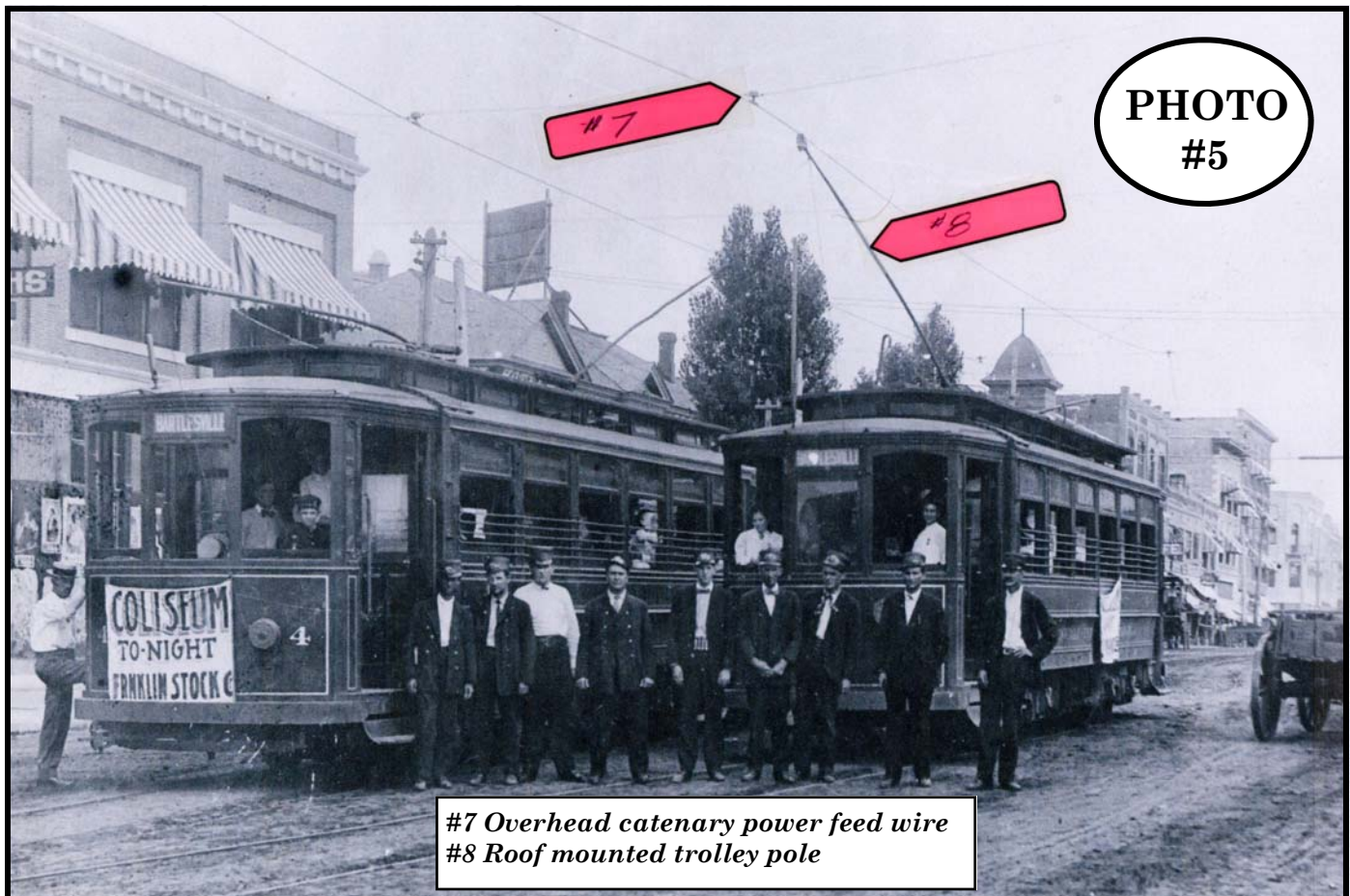
The motorman was the person that actually operated (or drove) the car. As previously noted, his position was at the forward end of the car (based on direction of the car travel) where he had a clear view of the path of travel down the track as well as the city streets.

In addition to the operation of the car, the motorman would lower and raise the trolley pole at the end of the route as well as moving the headlight to the opposite end of the car for preparation of the next trip.

Passing Sidings:

The BIR had three passing sidings within the Bartlesville area that enabled cars traveling in different directions to opposite ends of the route to pass each other. (Evidence of one of these passing sidings can be seen on Keeler between Eighth and Ninth by noting the outline of the siding related cracks in the asphalt pavement of the street).

These three sidings used switches (turnouts) that were equipped with a spring loaded movable switch point that did not require the car crew (motorman or conductor) to dismount from the car and "throw" the switch to the desired position as would have been required for



a conventional manually operated switch.

Photo 6 shows the passing siding on Frank Phillips between Keeler and Johnstone as viewed from the west looking east. The cars on the right (look closely there are two cars on that portion of the siding as evidenced by the two trolley poles) are east bound while the car on the left is west bound traveling to Smelertown.

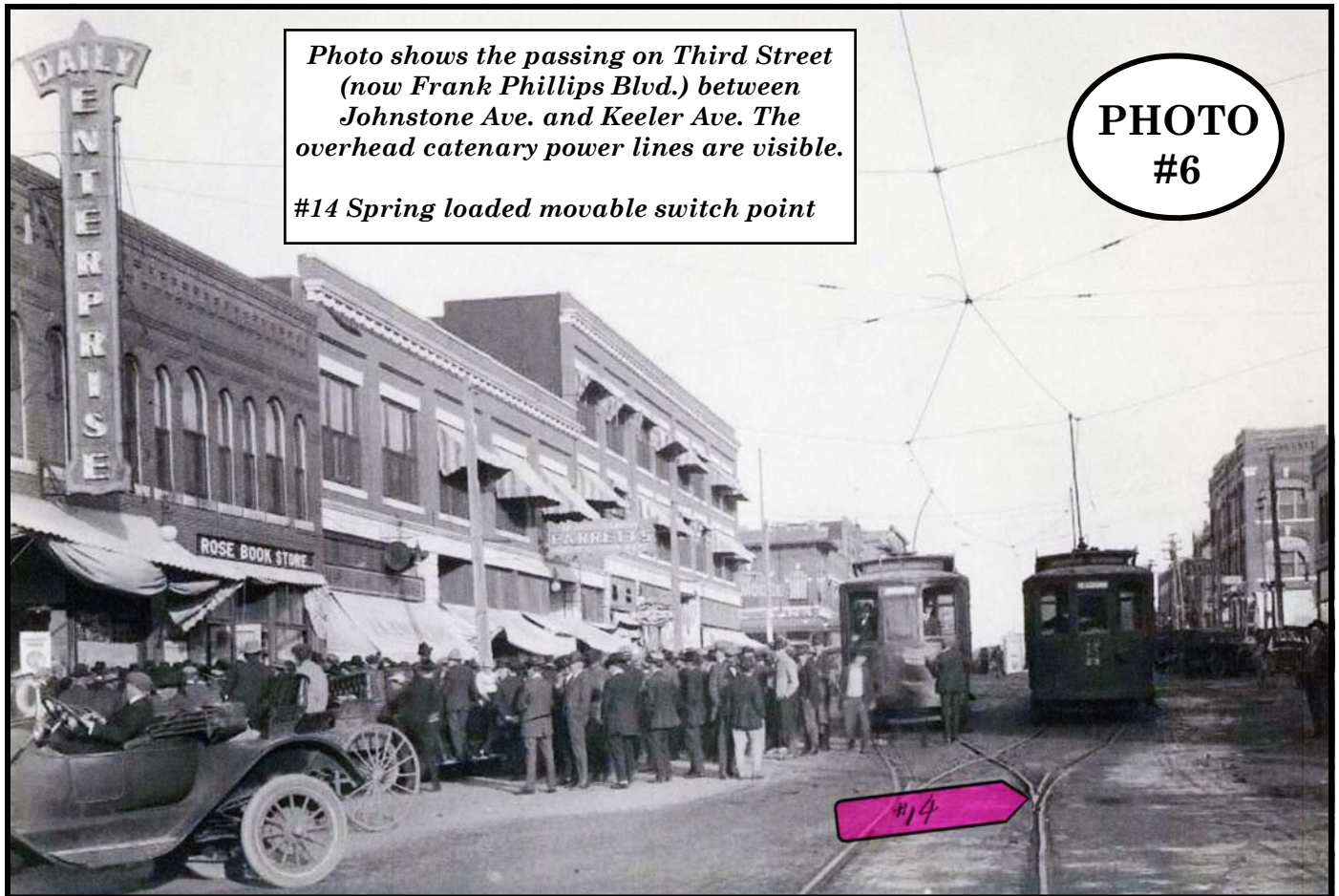
Item #14 notes the spring loaded movable switch point located at the west entrance to the siding which is “set” in its normal open position to switch all east bound cars entering the siding to the right hand track. In a similar manner, the spring loaded movable switch point located at the east entrance to the siding is “set” in its normal open position to switch all west bound cars entering the siding to the left hand track as viewed in this picture.

As the cars exited the east or west end of the siding from the left or right tracks, the car wheel flanges would overcome the spring tension of the movable switch point and cause the switch point to move to the opposite position to permit the car to travel through the switch. After the car had passed through the switch, the spring tension would reset the movable point to the normal open position for the next entering car. Note that this type of switch was used extensively for street car and interurban railways and there are some of these types of switches still in use.

Materials used for construction of Caney River Bridge Approach Embankments:

Significant remaining features of the BIR are the approach embankments that led to the bridge that had spanned the Caney River. These long embankments, on either side of the river, were constructed of earth as well as various cast-off materials from the zinc smelters that were once on the southwest side of Bartlesville.

The cast-off materials were primary broken pieces of zinc furnace clay/refractory “retorts” and “connys” that had been discarded after their normal cycle of usage in the furnaces.



*Photo shows the passing on Third Street
(now Frank Phillips Blvd.) between
Johnstone Ave. and Keeler Ave. The
overhead catenary power lines are visible.
#14 Spring loaded movable switch point*

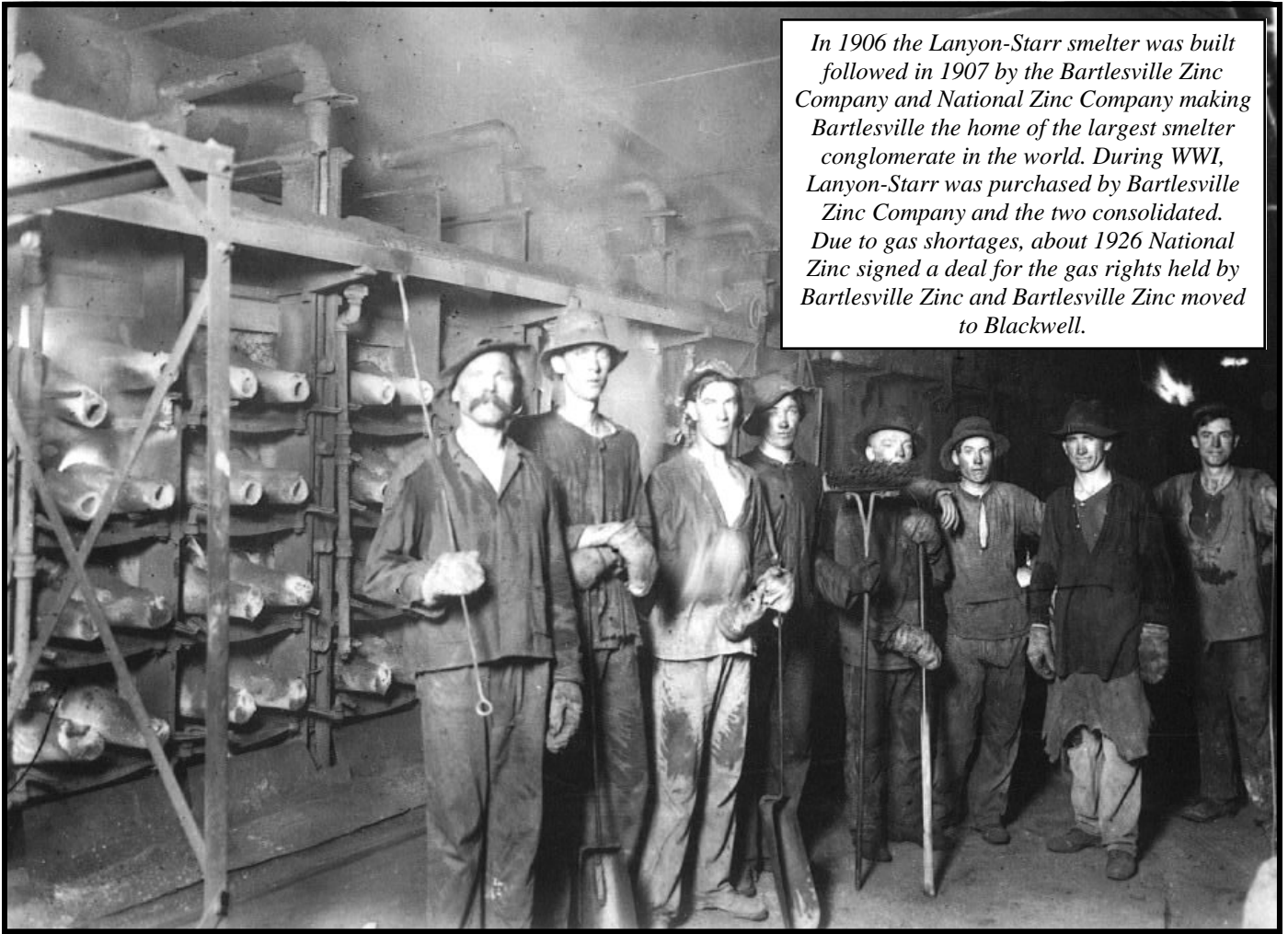
**PHOTO
#6**

The retorts were long cylindrical tube like vessels made out of refractory type clay for containing the sintered zinc ore which was heated for the liquidification/vaporization step in the refinement of the zinc ore.

The connys were located at the discharged end of the retort for the condensation of the resulting vapors into liquid zinc.

Both of these items, in their broken form, provided an abundance of material that was commonly used for area road and street base material as well as much of the base material for the two bridge approach embankments.





In 1906 the Lanyon-Starr smelter was built followed in 1907 by the Bartlesville Zinc Company and National Zinc Company making Bartlesville the home of the largest smelter conglomerate in the world. During WWI, Lanyon-Starr was purchased by Bartlesville Zinc Company and the two consolidated. Due to gas shortages, about 1926 National Zinc signed a deal for the gas rights held by Bartlesville Zinc and Bartlesville Zinc moved to Blackwell.

CHRONOLOGY

- 1905 Joseph J. Curl filed application to build the Bartlesville Interurban Railway.
- 1906 A forty-nine year franchise was granted to Bartlesville Interurban Railway Co.
- 1907 Construction began: Tracks, Bridges and Powerhouse
- 1908 Golden spikes driven and service began to Dewey
- 1912 Bartlesville Interurban Railway and Powerhouse sold to Henry Doherty Co.
- 1915 Interurban Park opened and the south "Loop" became operational
- 1916 Eight Interurban cars and 10.1 miles of track were in place
- 1919 Bartlesville Gas & Electric assumed operation
- 1919 Bartlesville Interurban Railway stopped service to Dewey
- 1920 Bartlesville Interurban Railway stopped all operations after 12 years and 1 day
- 1928 Property bought by Southwestern Gas & Electric Company
- 1930 Public Service Company bought the property at 4th and Comanche
- 1954 Powerhouse dismantled after fire damaged the building

Notice to the Public

The Bartlesville Interurban Railway Company has for some time in the past, been operating the railway department at a loss. The following table shows the income, expenses, and earnings of the railway department since 1913. It will be seen that for several years interest and replacement charges have not been earned and that since the concrete road between Bartlesville and Dewey was opened, and in fact even before this road was opened there was not sufficient income to pay for the daily labor and material necessary to operate the road.

Receipts, Expenses and Earnings Interurban Railway Department Bartlesville Interurban Ry. Co.

Year	Revenue Gross	Total		Interest Charge	Operating Deduction of Interest	Replace- ment Charges	Operatinb
		Operating Expenses	Net fram Operation				Net after Deduction
1913	\$74,543.03	\$35,830.66	\$38,712.37	\$17,990.03	\$20,722.34	\$7,551.31	Net after Deduction of Int. and Replace- ment Chg.
1914	62,705.78	35,916.56	26,789.22	18,948.51	7,840.71	7,953.64	*112.93
1915	50,028.53	35,264.69	14,763.84	19,172.43	*4,408.59	8,047.63	*12,456.22
1916	57,861.43	44,483.26	13,378.17	19,659.41	*6,281.24	8,252.04	*14,533.28
1917	54,953.93	46,263.65	8,690.28	19,926.42	*11,236.14	8,364.12	*19,600.26
1918	57,154.55	54,205.17	2,949.38	20,537.11	*17,587.73	8,620.45	*26,208.18
1st 6 mo. '19	29,003.43	33,581.71	*4,578.28	10,743.62	*15,324.90	4,509.63	*19,831.53
July '19	3,485.84	6,752.64	*3,266.80	1,740.60	*5,007.40	751.61	*5,759.01
Aug. '19	2,983.77	6,734.60	*3748.83	1,740.60	*5,489.43	751.61	*6,241.04

The * sign indicates deficit.

The condition of electric railways in all parts of the United States is probably well known. A very large number of them are now bankrupt, even in large communities and industrial centers where the traffic is heavy, and more than sixty companies operating more than a thousand miles of track have recently been forced to discontinue service. The growth of the individually owned automobiles and the use of motor buses has brought about a condition which is fast placing street cars in the Museum Class. The completion of the Concrete road between Bartlesville and Dewey has opened up a route which is twenty percent shorter than the route of the Interurban Company and which makes it much quicker to travel by way of the concrete road than by way of the Electric. Even in case the electric road was rebuilt and new cars put in service as quick time could not be made by the electric as by the concrete route because of the greater distance. The extension of street railway lines in all parts of the United States has practically been stopped because there is a realization that the building of hard surfaced roads, the improvement of streets, and the growth of automobiles is rapidly changing the means of transportation from the fixed route of street car lines to the more flexible and convenient means of transportation by the individual automobile and buses. This seems to be the trend of progress and the abandonment of street railway service is more an indication of prosperity and growth in the community than an indication of backsliding.

We have asked the Corporation Commission of the State for a hearing on our local situation and for permission to discontinue railway service. We understand that authority in this matter lies entirely with the Commission. In our application we have stated that with the Commission's approval we are willing to continue service from Bartlesville to Smelertown and during certain hours of the day to Tuxedo until such time as the improvement of the streets to Smelertown make other means of transportation available. It is our desire to keep the cars running as long as the income can be made to equal the expenses for labor and material or even nearly equal the expenses.

Ample opportunity will be given by the Commission for any citizen of the Community to object to our application and a notice of the meeting will be run in the local papers for at least ten days before the hearing.

The office of the Company is always open to anyone who wishes to discuss the matter with us or who may not feel that we are doing the right thing in asking for discontinuance of railway service. We would appreciate suggestions if you will be fair and frank enough to call at our office or call us by telephone.

Bartlesville Interurban Railway Co.

CURRENT INTERURBAN SITES TO SEE

For our Bartlesville area history seekers, there are many sites you pass each day and don't realize what they are or how they connect to Bartlesville history. We hope this collection of photos will entice you to study them closer.



Public Service Company at 4th and Comanche. Interurban cars traveled east and west from this location.



Looking east from PSO, through the break in the trees and over the hill is the support system for the Interurban Bridge



Traveling east from PSO the Interurban crossed a bridge. The support system for this bridge can be seen south of the Frank Phillips Blvd. Caney River bridge.



East of the Caney River and south of the Frank Phillips bridge, concrete support bases remain in wooded areas.



Many massive concrete supports remain in the wooded areas. This photo was taken south of Frank Phillips Blvd. just before the Caney River bridge and follows the line of travel from the Interurban terminal east to the Tuxedo area and the north to Dewey.



Traveling on Frank Phillips Blvd. during the winter months, when the foliage is sleeping, the Interurban embankment is visible on the south side of the road. The Interurban tracks were constructed on this embankment which was constructed of cast-off materials from the smelter operations of the Lanyon-Starr, Bartlesville Zinc and National Zinc Companies.



Even in the early 1900s recycling was foremost in the minds of Bartlesville pioneers. Since Bartlesville was home of the largest smelter conglomerate in the world, using the abundant cast-off materials as the base for roads and embankments made perfect sense.

Located along the Interurban embankments, the cast-off materials of clay/refractory can still be found. The photo at the left is representation of two pieces found by Rudy Geissler during his efforts to trace the Interurban tracks through the back woods of Bartlesville and Dewey.

As you can see, the materials have been hidden along the Bartlesville country side for nearly one-hundred years and have not degraded.



We have established the travel from 4th and Comanche, east over the Interurban Bridge at the Caney River and across the embankment. Next the Bartlesville Interurban traveled northeast through the Tuxedo area. As you travel along Frank Phillips Blvd., north of the road and east of the Caney River bridge, you will see a large concrete support resting just inside the tree line on the west side of Robinwood Park. Just north of this concrete support is a series of foundations for the wooden trestle.

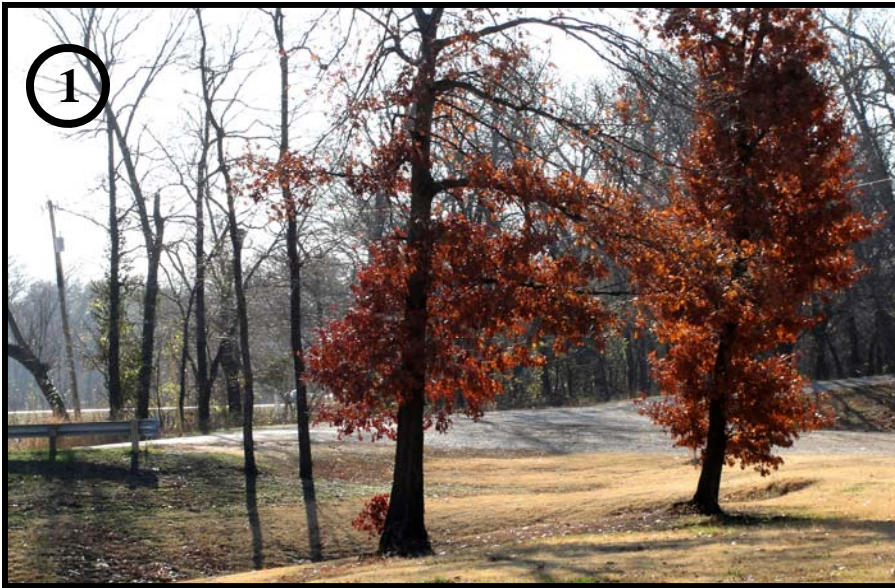
Right: Single wooden trestle foundation showing the four holes for the vertical wooden trestle supports located southwest corner of Robinwood Park on the north side of Frank Philips Boulevard.



Left: Broken remains of wooden trestle foundations that were scattered from their original positions when oil field workers built oil well access/service roads in the area.

Right: While standing on the concrete support shown at the top of this page, this photo shows the trail of wooden trestle foundations hidden within the brush, west of the Robinwood Park soccer fields.



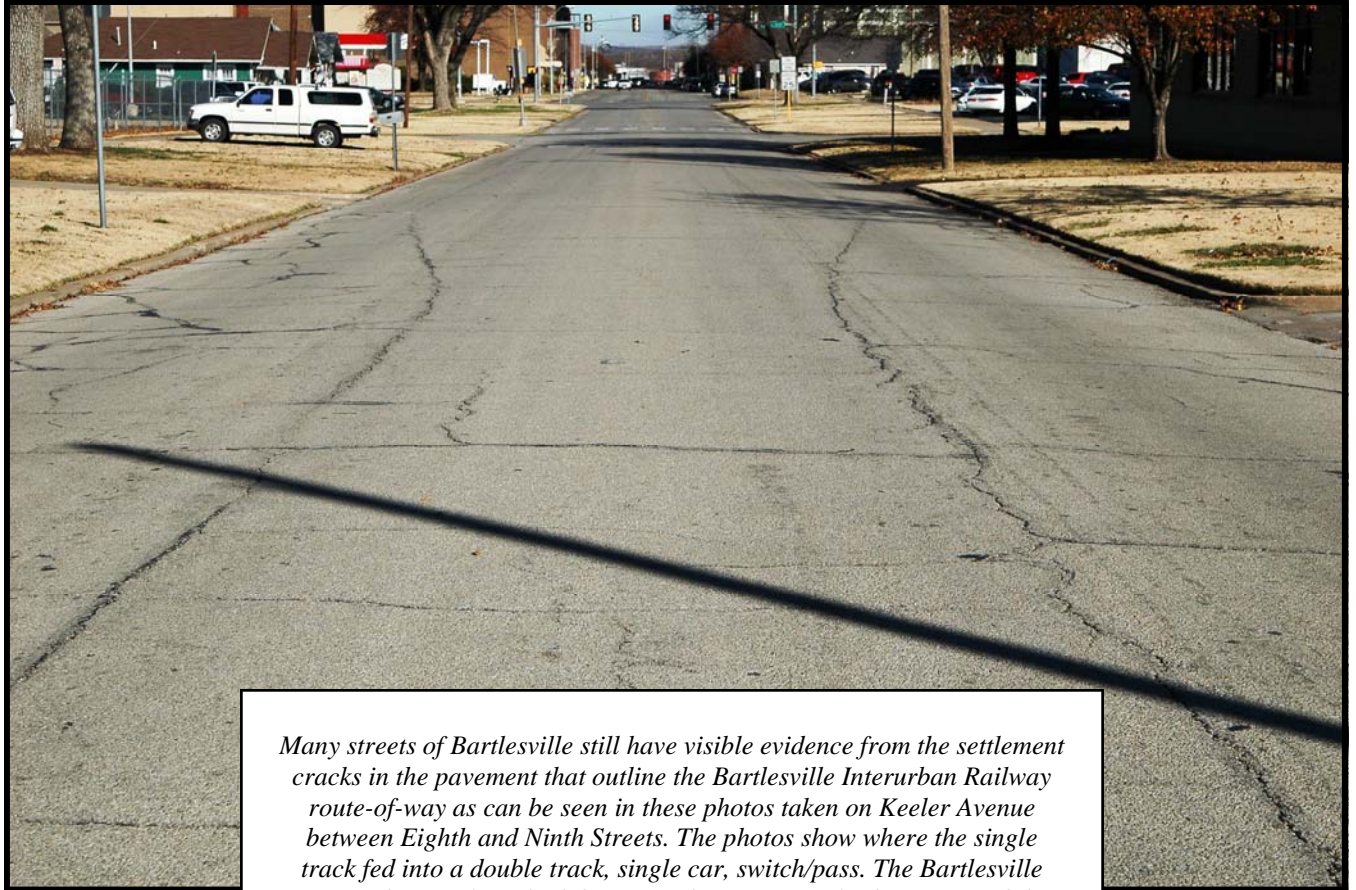


As the Interurban Railway made its way northeast towards the Tuxedo area, it traveled along the west edge of Robinwood Park and the City of Bartlesville flood retention pond. This photo shows the embankment as it flowed through Robinwood Park. Frank Phillips Blvd. can be seen in the background. The paved road leads to City facilities with a guard rail diverting traffic to the soccer field parking lot. This group of photos has been numbered to show the sequence through Robinwood Park.



The embankment made a direct line from the Caney River, across Frank Phillips Blvd. to Beck Drive and then through to the Tuxedo area.

KEELER AVENUE



Many streets of Bartlesville still have visible evidence from the settlement cracks in the pavement that outline the Bartlesville Interurban Railway route-of-way as can be seen in these photos taken on Keeler Avenue between Eighth and Ninth Streets. The photos show where the single track fed into a double track, single car, switch/pass. The Bartlesville Interurban Railway had three switch/passes: Keeler between Eighth and Ninth Streets, on Frank Phillips Boulevard between Keeler and Johnstone Avenues and Little Bess Stop on the northeast side of Bartlesville near Dewey. While the rails were removed from the streets of Dewey for scrap metal during World War II, almost all of the rails remain and were repaved over in Bartlesville.

