

Chapter 1

The '60s

In 1963, NOPSI touted the removal of the Canal streetcars as the Canal Street Transit Improvement Program, and they did a good job selling this to the public. Riding air-conditioned buses all the way from the lakefront to the river was much more appealing to Joe Average than transferring at City Park Avenue and riding the old, slow, hot streetcars. This is where the book will begin, almost where Louis Hennick left off, but with a little more detail about that grim day in May of 1964.



PROGRESS REPORT —

Announcing

the start of

NEW,

IMPROVED

Canal Line

Transit Service

TEMPORARY BUS STOPS ON CANAL STREET IN THE CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT



What the Canal Line Transit Improvement means to you...



QUICKER, MORE CONVENIENT TRANSIT SERVICE
The new bus service eliminates the previous inconvenience and time loss in transferring between the Canal streetcars and Canal Blvd. or West End Blvd. buses at City Park Ave. and Canal St.



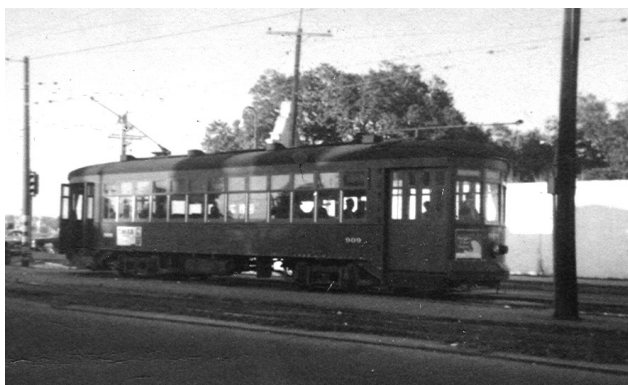
ATTRACTIVE, COMFORTABLE, NEW BUSES
Modern, year-round air-conditioned buses provide the latest developments in riding comfort. Smooth, automatic transmissions, soft air-suspension ride, contour seats, large, anti-glare windows, attractive interiors, and fluorescent lighting are among the features that add to riding enjoyment.



MORE BEAUTIFUL CANAL STREET
This is an artist's conception of how a section of Canal Street between Claiborne and City Park Avenues will look with all tracks, electric poles, and overhead wires removed from the neutral ground... new mercury vapor streetlights, curbs, and crosswalks installed... and the parkway landscaped. From Claiborne Avenue to the River, tracks and overhead wires will be removed and the former

Canal Street Transit Improvement Program brochure.

It was early, perhaps about 4:00 A.M., when the owl car (term for the all-night run) would leave the river on its regular run, go to the cemeteries, and return to the barn to tie up for the night. However, this morning was very different. The 958 was assigned to the all-night run, and it was jammed with trolley fans, preservationists, and maybe a handful of folks who wanted one last memory of riding the old Canal cars.



This is my only original photo of a Canal car, taken sometime in early 1964. My mother drove past the cemeteries and told me to take the shot using a Brownie camera.

Car 958 upon the end of its run, perhaps to show its displeasure, broke a trolley pole. Its final arrival was spectacular, going into Canal barn with a shower of sparks. The 972 pulled out of the barn, adorned in a banner that read "SEE ME ON ST. CHARLES."



958 prepares to leave Canal and Riverfront on the last "regular" run, May 30, 1964. (Photograph courtesy Otto Goessl)



935 running during construction of a third lane to Canal Street in 1964. (Photograph courtesy Gerald Landau)

See Me on St. Charles

Car 972, one of the lucky ones, was saved from the cutter's torch. It was restored for many years of service on the St. Charles line and is still operating today. Shortly after the car pulled out of the barn, NOPSI was somewhat in a hurry to dismantle the line, so power was disconnected more than once. After a few starts and stops, 972 finally made it to Canal and Carondelet, where bus 208 was ready to take over. The car crossed over to the St. Charles line, and the rest is history. A funeral-type wreath, stating, "Gone but not forever," was laid at Basin Street. What a prophecy this turned out to be. Slightly less than forty years later, the line would come back to life with a vengeance.

That same day, wire was taken down, and the

removal of rail began. NOPSI was afraid that somehow preservationist groups would get a restraining order to halt the demise of the line. One such group, Streetcars Desired, tried but failed to save the Canal line. Besides the thirty-five cars lovingly restored for use on St. Charles, eleven cars were preserved and sent around the country to trolley museums and other rail groups. The following information came from a list provided by NOPSI for trolley fans. Some cars went full circle, returning to New Orleans some twenty years later for use on the Riverfront line (see descriptions of 919, 924, 952, and 957). The rest weren't so lucky, winding up in junkyards around town. NOPSI, to prevent the possibility of saving any cars, cut the remaining cars in half before sending them off for scrap. Those eleven cars are described in detail later in this chapter.



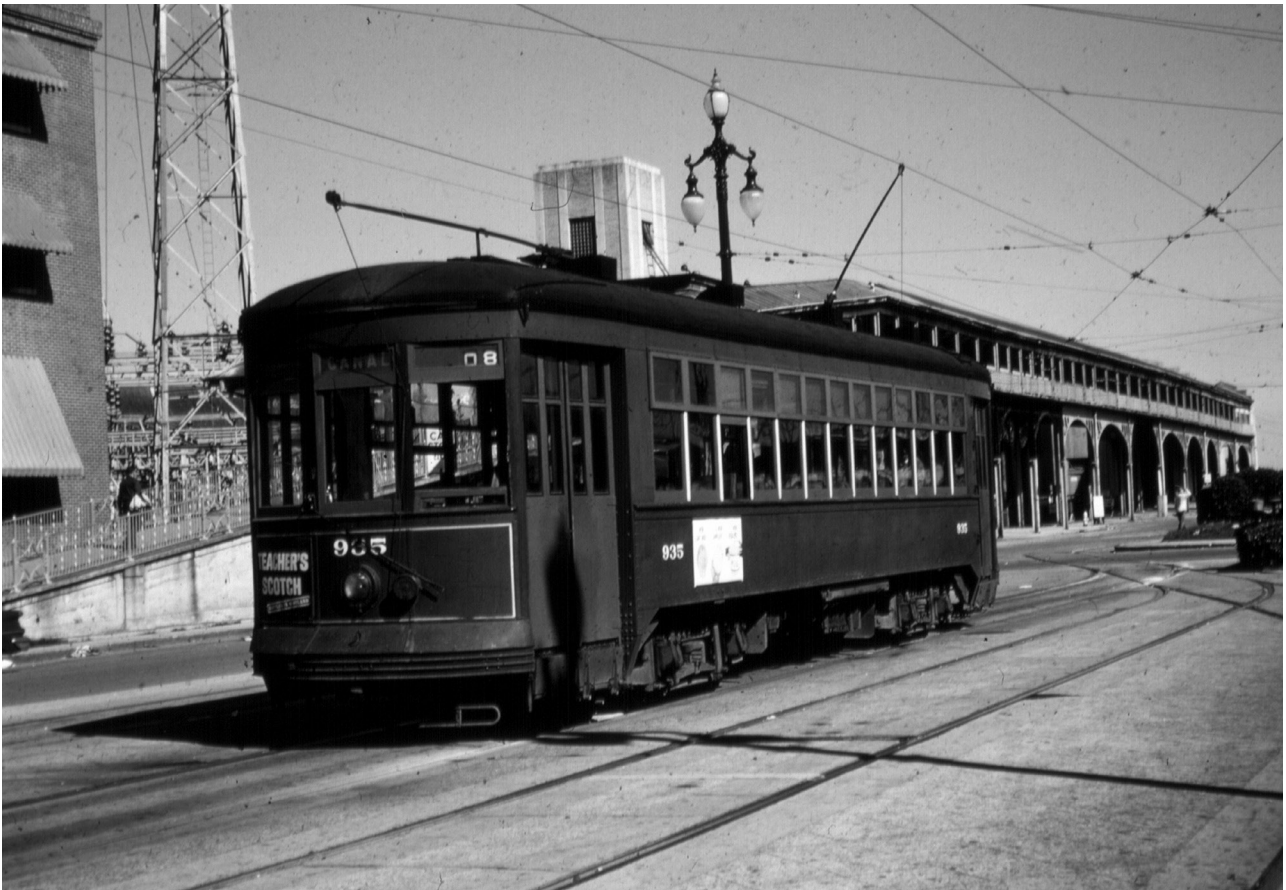
925 heading inbound at South Prieur Street. (Photograph courtesy Gerald Landau)



972 is ready to depart Canal barn in the early morning hours of May 30, 1964. (Photograph courtesy Otto Goessl)



It is nearly the end of the line for Canal as 972 is ready to switch to St. Charles. (Photograph courtesy Otto Goessl)



935 is ready for an outbound trip at the foot of Canal Street. (Photograph courtesy Gerald Landau)



A much better view of the 908 at the cemeteries. (Photograph courtesy Gerald Landau)



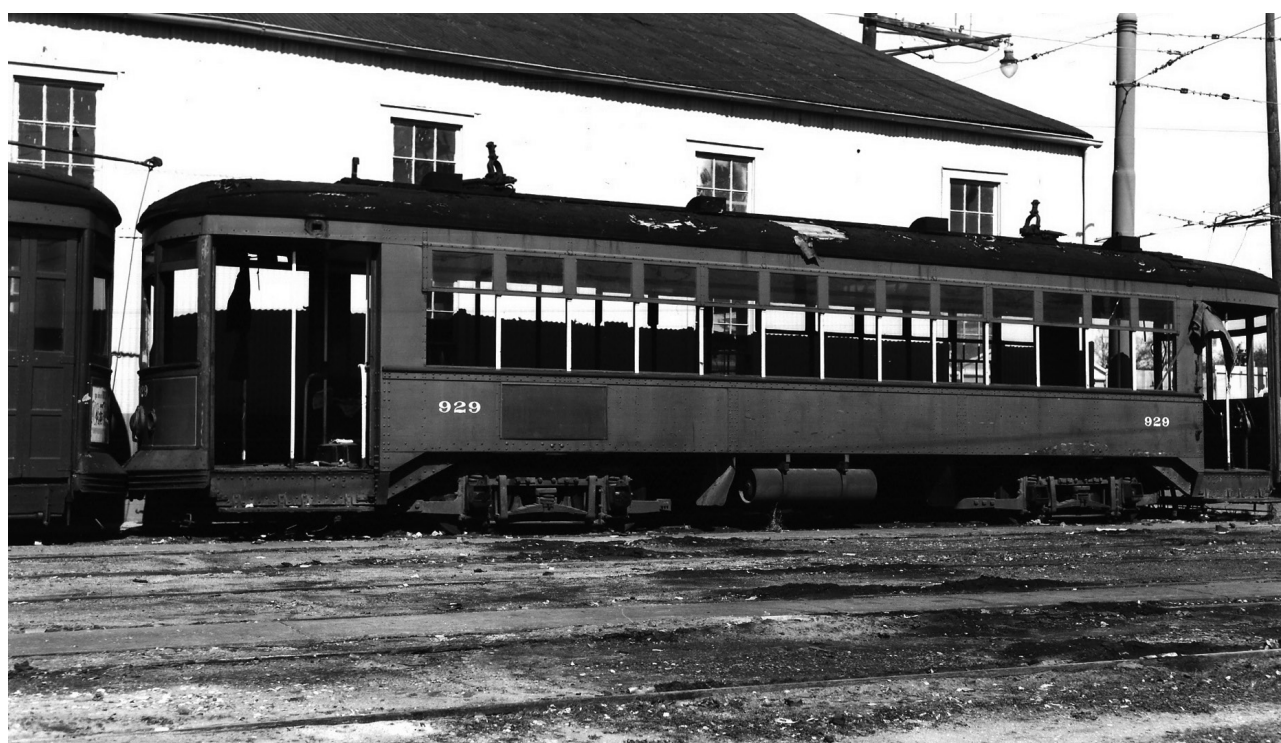
931 is shown making the loop at Liberty Circle. (Photograph courtesy Gerald Landau)



932, shown at the cemeteries, will live to see many more days of service on St. Charles. (Photograph courtesy Otto Goessl)



It is June of 1964 and the 918 is headed for High Point, North Carolina, where it was built. (Photograph courtesy Otto Goessl)



The 929 is being prepared for the scrapper's torch. (Photograph courtesy Otto Goessl)

Variations on Appearance

During the early '60s, the cars underwent several variations in appearance before the final look was decided upon. For example, the 931, 935, and others had doors without indentations at the bottom, as shown below.

Car 937 had silver stripes, white stanchions, and President's Conference Committee (PCC) windows. Several cars (including 911, 915, 920, and 959) had PCC-type standee windows actually very similar to the St. Louis trolleybuses. According to Elmer Vondullen, those small standee windows were actually GM bus (maroon and cream 1800-series) extras that were in stock.

Then came aluminum doors and roofs and enlarged standee windows. The trolley poles were changed to swivel type, replacing the harp. However, the change to the swivel pole would last for less than ten years. This decision turned out badly for car 930 (dewirement and fire), as described in chapter 5. The object was to save money, as there would only be one type of pole

(swivel) interchangeable on trolley cars and trolleybuses. Included is a brochure distributed by NOPSI touting the improvements to the St. Charles cars.

By the end of 1964, all of the renovated cars wound up on St. Charles, and the Canal cars were literally falling apart. NOPSI was planning to keep the St. Charles line until about 1968, but there was such uproar about the removal of Canal that an agreement was reached between the city, NOPSI, and preservationists to keep the St. Charles line indefinitely. Since buses would spoil the ambiance of the avenue, in 1967 the city became serious about preserving the last trolley



(Photograph courtesy Otto Goessl)



(Photograph courtesy Otto Goessl)



(Photograph courtesy Gerald Landau)



The final look for renovated Perleys. (Photograph courtesy Otto Goessl)



969 rounds Lee Circle, August of 1968. (Photograph courtesy Joe Lance)



947 is outbound approaching Willow Street. (Photograph courtesy Joe Lance)

PROGRESS REPORT on the



St. Charles line Transit Improvement Program

We invite your attention to these features:

- Fresh Appearance (inside and out)
- Rebuilt Major Components
- Improved Lighting



St. Charles STREETCAR IMPROVEMENTS



In mid 1964 top-to-bottom renovation of Car No. 945 marked completion of a St. Charles streetcar rebuilding program which began back in February 1962. Still going on is a program of track and roadbed improvements on St. Charles and Carrollton avenues, also started in 1962.

Renovated Streetcars

All thirty-five St. Charles streetcars have undergone complete renovation and redecoration, including some improvements that can't be seen, such as overhauling of motors and installation of new gears.



- New, All-Steel Wheels and Axles with Roller Bearings have been installed to help reduce side sway and give a smoother ride.



- Floors have been rebuilt and rubber resurfaced to provide more comfortable and secure footing.
- Roofs have been covered with aluminum for improved weather protection.
- Rebuilt all-metal doors and upper windows have been installed for longer



- Brighter lighting has been added to improve seeing conditions for readers, giving the car interiors a more cheerful atmosphere.

Better Transit: Everybody's Business

Improved St. Charles line transit benefits primarily the daily users of the service. But, to the extent that these improvements attract new riders, with the result that fewer private automobiles are on the streets, motorists and transit riders alike will enjoy the smoother flow of traffic.



St. Charles Transit Improvement brochure.

line in the city. Plans were formulated for a better renovation than the one done in the early '60s. The cars once again went through the process of being rebuilt one or two at a time. NOPSI began this renovation program in 1967 by painting the 933. The 900 was next, renovated with all aluminum vestibules and windows along with a change of interior color. Then 903 through 907 (in order) were done, but then the order skipped to 923. The remaining cars were completed with no rhyme or reason to numerical order. One feature changed in this renovation was the headlight. Prior to 1967, a 56-watt, 130-volt railway light bulb was used. The setup was twenty-two lights, twenty constant, four circuits of five, so the headlight and vestibule light were lit depending on which end of the car the motorman was in. After the late '60s renovation, an automobile sealed beam headlight became the light that let

you know the streetcar was coming, and it is still used to this day. The sealed beams installed were on resistors to run on 600 volts. In the early '70s, fare boxes ran on 600 volts to 12-volt inverters. In the photo (opposite) of car 969, the "look" isn't much different from the previous photo of car 906; however, the car has been redone with aluminum vestibules and windows to go along with a new coat of paint and the new headlight.

The color of the interiors of the remaining streetcars changed from a deep blue with a powder blue ceiling to lime green with a white ceiling. The new GM buses (referred to as Fishbowls because of the large windshield) that ran at this same time were painted this same lime green and silver. NOPSI eliminated the blue scheme, which they used on the old, non-air-conditioned, red-and-white GM buses, in favor of the green to save money on paint.

Where Are They Now?

This section will primarily be concerned with the eleven Perley Thomas cars that were shipped around the country in 1964 to various trolley museums and the progress (or lack of) these museums have had with running them, restoring them, or passing them on to others. "Where are they now?" you ask. Let's start with the list provided by NOPSI in 1965. All cars were donated, with the cost of transportation left up to the receiving parties.

Car 832 went to the Arden Trolley Museum

in Washington, Pennsylvania. Recently restored, it is in operating condition today. The 832 is probably the most well known of the eleven, as it was featured in a world-famous photograph on Bourbon Street on the Desire line and was the war bond car in the '40s.

836 is at the Warehouse Point Trolley Museum in Warehouse Point, Connecticut, beautifully restored and operating today.

850 was sent to Branford Trolley Museum in Branford, Connecticut. Arriving in 1964, the car was never put into the museum's operation. The major problem was the gauge. In 1972, I was told



(Photograph courtesy Pennsylvania Trolley Museum)



(Photograph courtesy Connecticut Electric Railway Association)



850's dedication ceremonies on June 2, 2007, at Branford Trolley Museum.
(Photograph courtesy Richard Panse)

there was no money to make it standard gauge. However, as of mid 2007, the car had undergone a total renovation. 850 is operating at Branford Trolley Museum after a tour of several north-eastern cities to promote New Orleans recovery. Kudos to Branford for a marvelous renovation!

These three cars (832, 836, and 850) are the only survivors of the 800-class cars.

913 went to Orange Empire Railway Museum in Perris, California. A 1968 visit to Perris found the car in poor condition only four years after its arrival. The car was restored in the '80s but is in disrepair once again. To prevent further deterioration, 913 was covered with a large tarpaulin. The car was sold, as the museum now wants to

concentrate on Southern California only. Ironically, on the day Katrina made landfall in New Orleans, August 29, 2005, the 913 went to San Francisco's Muni F line heritage collection.

918 was shipped back to the Thomas (bus works) factory in High Point, North Carolina, where it was manufactured. 918 is now under the care of the museum in Spencer, North Carolina. It has not run since 1964, and the museum intends to restore the car cosmetically for static display.

919 went to the Texas State Fairgrounds in 1964 but was returned to New Orleans in the mid '80s. 919 was restored in 1987 and renumbered 451 for use on the new Riverfront line. 919/451 operated on the Riverfront line for almost ten



919/451 sits forlorn at Carrollton barn.

years (1988-1997). It is now in disrepair and in storage at the Carrollton Barn.

924 went to Atlanta and was used at Underground Atlanta as a tourist information office until 1985 when it returned to New Orleans. After restoration, it was renumbered 450 and ran until 1997. The car has been in storage ever since; now in disrepair, 924 is stored at Carrollton Barn.

952 and 959 went to the Tennessee Valley Railroad Museum in Chattanooga, Tennessee. The 952 ran at the Chattanooga Choo-Choo Hotel from the late '60s to the mid '80s. It fell into disrepair and was replaced by the 959 for service at the hotel parking lot. 952 returned to New Orleans in 1990, became the 456, and ran until 1997 on the Riverfront line. The car was put into storage until 2000 when it was repainted and renumbered back to its original number, 952. It was then sent to San Francisco in exchange for California Cable car #59.

957 went to the Trinity Valley RR Club in Weatherford, Texas. In a strange turn of events, Trinity lost their lease and sold 957 to Spaghetti

Warehouse for use in their restaurant chain. The car was too tall to fit into the intended building, so the plan was abandoned. The McKinney Avenue Transit Authority (MATA) entered the picture and traded two Dallas streetcars for the 957. MATA workers rushed to the scrap yard, where the trucks and operating equipment were standing on a flatbed trailer waiting to be unloaded and dismantled. With the trailer stuck in the mud, MATA had arrived in time to save the parts. MATA sold the 957 to NORTA and used the proceeds to buy another streetcar and spare parts for its fleet.

957 returned to New Orleans in March of 1986, and it remained untouched until the Riverfront line was changed to wide gauge in 1997. The 957 was restored in 1996 and renumbered 457 and received Philadelphia PCC car wheels and controls. These were later removed in favor of Czech Republic (TATRA) parts. The 1996 restoration made the 957/457 the only original car to conform to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and to have a handicapped door cut



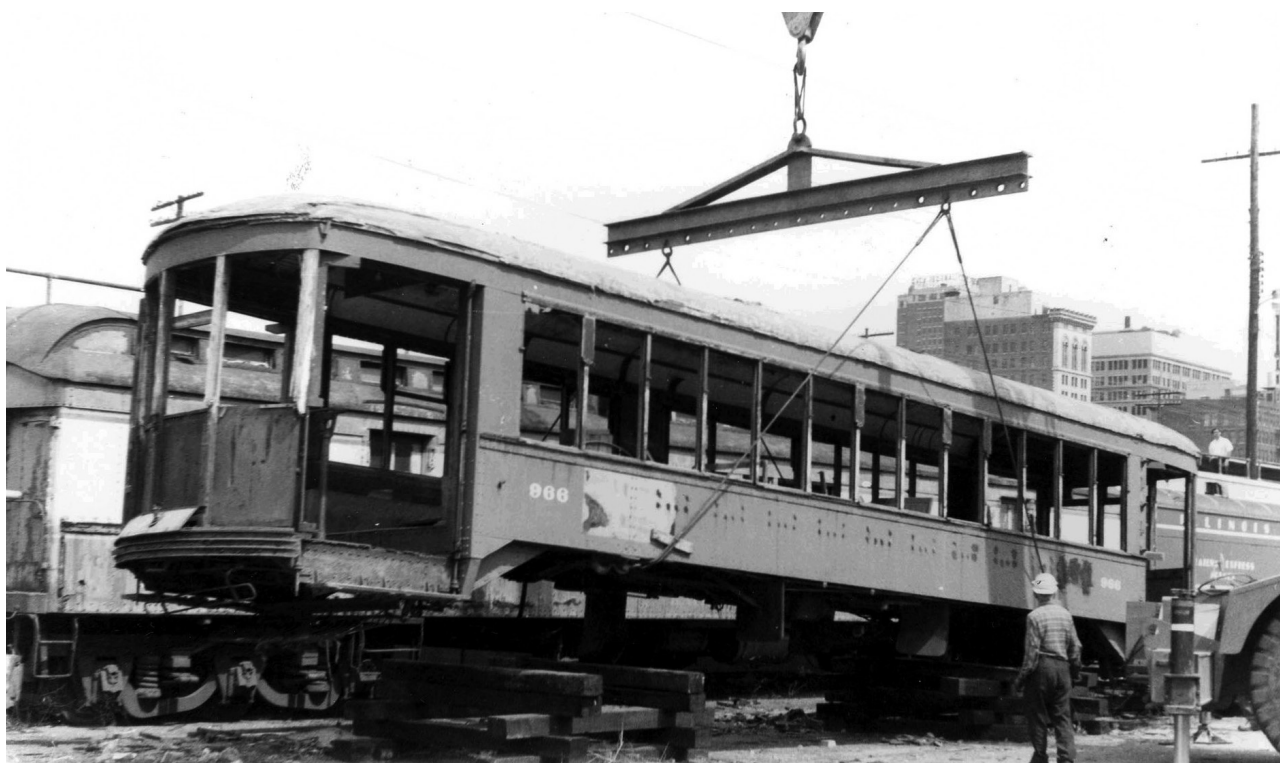
952 on a sunny day in Chattanooga. (Photograph by Joe Lance)



Now in an unfamiliar livery, 959 sees service at Chattanooga Choo-Choo Hotel in July of 1997.



The 957 before renovation in 1996.



966 is being moved from Birmingham to Kennebunkport.

into the side of the car. When NORTA did this and had plans to do the other two cars (919 and 924), preservationists reacted with



966 operating at Lowell State Park, and yes that is snow!
(Photograph courtesy Seashore Trolley Museum)

horror, and these plans were scrapped in favor of building new cars. The other thirty-five original cars on St. Charles are exempt from the ADA due to their age and historical background. The 957 was operating on the river as the 457 until Hurricane Katrina. It has not yet returned to service.

966 went to the Heart of Dixie Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society (NRHS) in Birmingham, Alabama. 966 fell into terrible despair and was sold by the club to Seashore Trolley Museum in Kennebunkport, Maine in the '80s. It was lovingly restored and is now operating at Lowell, Massachusetts. This car is a true success story and should serve as an example to all who own one of these rare cars.

None of the eleven that were sent away in 1964 has ever made it back into regular service on the St. Charles line. Odds are they won't either.



962 is ready to depart Carrollton and Claiborne. (Photograph courtesy Joe Lance)



968 has just turned from St. Charles onto South Carrollton. (Photograph courtesy Joe Lance)



972 is inbound turning onto St. Charles. (Photograph courtesy Joe Lance)



969 is outbound at Milan Street on a sunny August day in 1968. (Photograph courtesy Joe Lance)



Motorman Charles Scallan guides 948 outbound at Lee Circle. (Photograph courtesy Joe Lance)



972 on Canal Street, August 1968. Notice the fleur-de-lis light standard and 250th anniversary sign. (Photograph courtesy Joe Lance)



One of my first photographs of Car 29 back in 1969.