



# MCHS News

Nov 2019

Opening Doors to Madison County History

Vol. 7 No. 6

**Historical Museum**  
715 N Main Street  
Edwardsville, IL 62025

**Hours:**

The museum is currently closed for renovation.

**Archival Library**  
801 N Main Street

**Hours:**

Wed-Fri 9 am - 4 pm  
Sunday 1 pm - 4 pm

**Phone:**

618-656-7569

**Web Address:**

madcohistory.org

**E-mail:**

info@madcohistory.org

**About Us:**

The MCHS museum complex, consisting of a modern archival library, a museum in the 1836 Weir House and the Helms Collection Center, is owned by the nonprofit Madison County Historical Society and operated jointly with Madison County.

The Madison County Historical Society is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization.

## THE ELECTRIC RAILWAYS OF MADISON COUNTY

*The East St. Louis and Suburban Railway began as a number of privately-owned electric streetcars and intercity electric trains that eventually covered all but the southeast corner of Madison County. Most were gone by the late 1930s, except for a line from Granite City to St. Louis where the cars continued to run until 1958. In this issue of the MCHS news, railroad historian Mark Godwin of Lebanon tells of the rise and fall of the electric trains in Madison County.*

*By Mark Godwin*

The East St. Louis and Suburban Railway was a 110-mile interurban system that ran west across the Mississippi River to St. Louis and fanned out eastward into Illinois, reaching the communities of Belleville to the southeast, O'Fallon and Lebanon to the east, Collinsville and Edwardsville to the northeast and Granite City and Alton to the north.

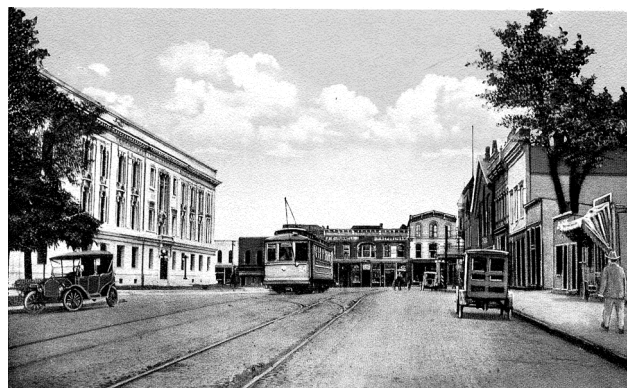
Better known as the Great East Side Railway, it was a consolidation of several streetcar, suburban and interurban lines. From humble beginnings as a horse car line in the late 19th century, it grew through the golden age of the trolley car era until the end of most passenger service in the mid-1930s. A few lines survived into the late '50s and '60s.

The first railroad bridge across the Mississippi River at St. Louis was the Eads Bridge, built in 1874. The St. Louis and East St. Louis Electric Railway laid rails on the wagon deck of the bridge, and in December 1889 ran the first electric car across the river to St. Louis. This would prove vital to the operations of the interurban companies of both St. Clair and Madison Counties.

The flurry of building in Belleville that accompanied the railway prompted construction of other interurbans from East St. Louis into Madison County. In September 1898, the Mississippi Valley Railway was incorporated to connect East St. Louis, Madison and Granite City, but failed to meet construction deadlines. John Day, who had previously built the St. Louis and Belleville Electric line, stepped in with \$2,500 and a commitment to build the line in 90 days. In just five weeks, the new Mississippi Valley Transit Company laid 12 miles of track between Collinsville and Edwardsville. The first car arrived in LeClaire (a suburb of Edwardsville) on August 31, 1901, greeted by the whistles of the N. O. Nelson Manufacturing Company.

Cars from Collinsville entered East St. Louis

on the old alignment of the "National Trail" crossing the Pennsylvania and the Baltimore and Ohio (B & O) Railroads at grade and terminated on North Ninth Street in the Landsdowne neighborhood. The East St. Louis Railway streetcar line originally terminated its own tracks just south of this spot, across from the Terminal RR of St. Louis and the Venice and Carondelet. Later, the streetcar line crossed these tracks at grade and made a connection with the Mississippi



*A photo postcard of St. Louis Street in Edwardsville shows how the tracks of the electric trains once went down the center of streets in many Madison County towns. (Jett)*

Valley where a new wood trestle had been built over the Pennsylvania and the B&O. Running east out of the city the line ran on the south side of Highway 40 past the famed Cahokia Mounds.

A carbarn and substation were located at Waters, Illinois, near the base of the bluffs below Collinsville. The tracks on the Mississippi Valley grade began on a combination of private right of way, public streets and along the shoulder of roadways to reach Collinsville, Maryville and Edwardsville. They terminated at the Madison County Courthouse in Edwardsville.

The Collinsville, Caseyville and East St. Louis Railway was incorporated in March 1899. The 12-mile line opened October 20, 1900. Built to "St. Louis Broad Gauge," it connected with the St. Louis, Belleville and Suburban at Edgemont, ran down the original alignment of Bluff Road (now Route 157) and crossed the Louisville and Nashville and the St. Louis and O'Fallon on a grade separation at French Village. The line ran down the middle of Long Street in Caseyville, crossed the B&O at grade, but the line split for a time north of town as the Pennsylvania refused to allow a grade crossing.

*continued page 4*

## ABOUT US

### MCHS BOARD

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### VOLUNTEERS

There are abundant and varied opportunities for volunteers at either the museum or the archival library. If interested, please call 618-656-7569.

### MEMBERSHIPS

Several membership levels are available to those interested in supporting the work of preserving Madison County history through an MCHS membership. Memberships run on the calendar year, Jan 1-Dec 31. Applications are available on our website, or at the Archival Library.

### PUBLICATIONS

#### MCHS NEWS

6 issues annually  
Cindy Reinhardt, Editor

## ARCHIVAL LIBRARY SPOTLIGHT

By Mary Westerhold

### NEW RESEARCH SOURCES

Anyone who actively researches their family history has found the lack of early civil records in some states to be a brick wall. Official vital records can pin down exact dates of birth and death along with names of parents that are otherwise nearly impossible to find.

When vital records are not available, church records can often fill the gaps. Recently, both familysearch.org and ancestry.com have added or updated records that are helpful for those seeking Missouri and Illinois ancestors through church records.

Familysearch.org recently updated the database of Illinois Church Records. The description online states the records date from 1837-1995 and include multiple denominations and theological seminaries in Illinois. Similar records exist for Missouri and images of the original records are included for both states. In addition, the large cities often have additional

records available. Only Illinois and Missouri are mentioned here, but be sure to check for similar records in any state you are researching.

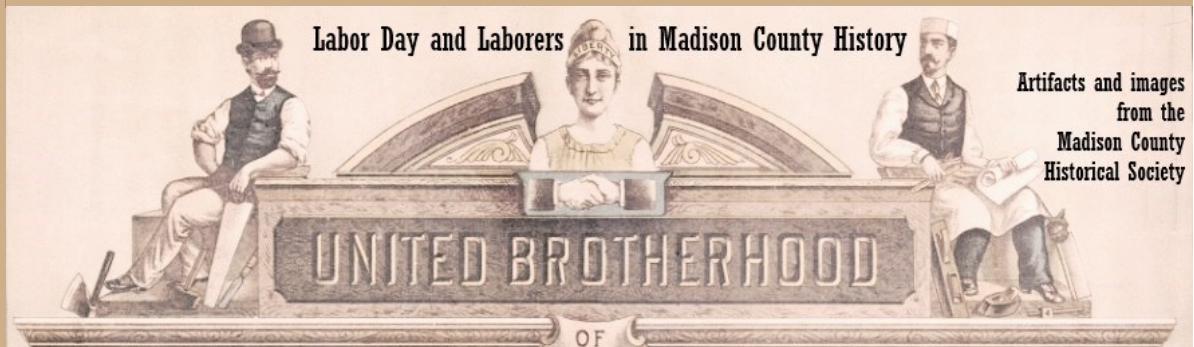
In addition, if you have an ancestry.com subscription available to you, the Sacramental Records of the Springfield, Illinois, Roman Catholic Diocese are now available. The dates range from 1857 to 1975 and include several counties in central and south-central Illinois. Depending on the parish, the records can include baptisms, confirmations, marriages, and burials.

Check out these new and updated collections and see if you can break through your brick wall!

(Personal Note – I found the death date of my second great-grandmother in the Springfield Diocese records, a fact that I have been trying to find for over 30 years!)

## MUSEUM SPOTLIGHT

By Jenn VanBibber



### NEW EXHIBITS

Although the museum building is closed for renovation, museum staff are not letting that stop them from providing new exhibits for the public, both on-line and at the Madison County Courthouse.

Using artifacts, photographs and other documentary materials, the museum staff has recently created exhibits at the Courthouse and Administration Building that explore harvesting, schools (at right), veterans, and Labor Day.

In addition, there is a new on-line exhibit, "Labor Day and Laborers in Madison County History." The online exhibit expands on the information found in the exhibit cases. The image above is from the exhibit which can be found at <https://madcohistory.org/online-exhibits/laborers-in-madison-county-history/>

### STAFF GRATEFUL

I just want to say "Thank You" to everyone who has donated items to the museum this year. Staff and volunteers have cataloged some really interesting pieces. We are honored to help preserve your piece of Madison County history.



**MCHS GIFT MEMBERSHIPS AVAILABLE  
CALL 618-656-1294 FOR INFORMATION.**



## 2020 MCHS SPEAKER SERIES LINE-UP ANNOUNCED

MCHS is proud to announce another great schedule of speakers for the 2020 season. The free lectures that provide insight into various aspects of Madison County history have been very well attended this year.

The series is offered every other month beginning on February 9 with a program on renowned abolitionist Elijah P. Lovejoy by Professor Emeritus Stephen Hansen.

On April 19, local author Peter Stehman will relate the fascinating story of Robert Praeger, a Collinsville man who was murdered by a mob during World War I.

Dr. Julie Zimmerman, Professor and Chair of the Department of Anthropology at SIUE will provide insight into the findings at the Gehring Site at her program on June 14.

New MCHS Board member Joanne Condellone will tell the story of Italian immigration to Madison County at her program on August 9.

J. Eric Robinson will return on October 11 to tell stories about the African-American colony in Pin Oak Township, a subject that he will also address as guest author of the January newsletter.

All of the above are on Sunday afternoons at 2 p.m. in the fellowship hall of Immanuel United Methodist Church, across the street from the Madison County Archival Library.

## LIVING HISTORY DAYS A GREAT SUCCESS

Living History Days: A Chautauqua with Mark Twain and Friends was a wonderful success in September so plans are being made to repeat the event next year. This year guests enjoyed the company of Mark Twain, Mother Jones, Booker T. Washington, William Jennings Bryan, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton who brought a group of friends from the Women's Christian Temperance Union.

Although we don't know yet who will show up next year, they will be certain to entertain. Perhaps Teddy Roosevelt and friends?

The event was made possible through the cooperative efforts of the Madison County Historical Society, the 1820 Col. Benjamin Stephenson House, and the Southern Illinois University Edwardsville Department of Historical Studies. Funding was provided through grants from the City of Edwardsville and the SIUE Meridian Society.

## ISHS TO PUBLISH WILDI STORY

The Illinois State Historical Society will feature the John Wildi story from the September issue of the *MCHS News* in the next issue of *Illinois Heritage* magazine. *Illinois Heritage* is a bi-monthly publication of the Illinois State Historical Society.

## RENOVATION WORK CONTINUES



*Restoration of the exterior of the 1836 Weir House continues while at the same time the Interpretive Committee works with Inland Design on plans for the interior of the museum which will have all new exhibit halls that tell the story of Madison County through artifacts, photographs, stories and interactive exhibits.*

## 2020 MCHS MEMBERSHIPS AVAILABLE NOW

Your MCHS membership renewal form will arrive in your mailbox soon. Members can use the form to renew for 2020, or, if preferred, memberships can be renewed on-line at <https://madcohistory.org/membership/>

Please take a moment to renew when it arrives. Early renewals are a great benefit to the Society because higher membership levels are valuable when applying for grants. Memberships in MCHS run on the calendar year from January 1 through December 31.

## MCHS WEBSITE IMPROVEMENTS

Over the last month, there have been many improvements made to the MCHS website. Articles on recent and future Society activities can be found there as well as an archive of searchable copies of the MCHS News going back to 2013.

Readers can also learn more about the Society and visit pages for the Museum and Archival Library that include online exhibits.

## EVENTS AND PROGRAMMING VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

MCHS has greatly expanded their schedule of programming and events and are looking for, as they say, "a few good men (or women)." The Events Committee, chaired by Norma Asadorian, meets monthly to stay on top of all that's going on. Volunteers are needed to help with set-up or ushering at the Speaker Series, to assist with a Trivia Night next summer, to serve as a host at MCHS tables at various events held throughout the county (mostly in summer) or to help plan more events. Call 618-656-1294 if you'd like to join in the fun!

## 2020 NEW AND RENEWING MEMBERS

September - October ♦ Thank you for supporting MCHS!

### \$250 Benefactor

Mike & Cindy Reinhardt

### \$50 Family

Lennie & Margie Haleen  
Ruth Joachimsthler  
Paul & Barb Pizzini

### \$35 Individual

Nelson Lee Beneze  
Lee Collier  
Cindy Green  
Lana Hediger  
Barbara Luchtefeld

Mary McKenzie  
Ellen Nordhauser  
Mike Ritchie  
Marian Smithson  
Rachel Thompkins  
Mary Westerhold

# ELECTRIC RAILWAYS

Passengers had to cross the tracks on foot. Eventually the gap was closed by a 780-foot wooden trestle. The company started with two cars, but later added three more.

## Alton

The last large component of the East St. Louis and Suburban was the Alton, Granite and St. Louis (AG&StL) which was incorporated in February 1904. Like the Suburban, it was a consolidation of several other lines. The earliest line in the Alton area was the Alton and Upper Alton Railway and Carrying Company (A/UA/CC) which was incorporated in February 1867 and opened in 1868. It provided hourly service that linked Alton and Upper Alton. Horse car tracks went from City Hall up Second Street, past Illinois Glass, up the hill on Garden and Manning Streets, and terminated on Merchant Street in Upper Alton.



*This horse-drawn line car in Alton was part of "The Great East Side Electric Railway System" whose logo can be seen on the side of the carriage and at right. Notice the ladder on the back which was used to repair the overhead electrical line. ( MCHS)*

By 1886, the line had four horse cars, 26 horses, and 2¾ miles of track. The car barn and stable, located at 1628 Washington (formerly Manning), was a flat-roof brick structure. Mules were kept in the basement.

The Alton Improvement Association (AIA) was incorporated in 1887 to serve the Middletown area of Alton. Also leaving from near City Hall, this line proceeded uphill on Market and then zigzagged across town on Sixth, Alby, 12th, Henry, 15th, Liberty and Grove to Central Ave. An 1898 extension from Central via Franklin and private right of way to the drainage of Shield Branch Creek was built to gain access to College Ave. The car shed and stables were built in Middletown along the 1½ mile line.

Alton, known as "Bluff City," is alleged to be one of the hilliest cities in the US, second only to San Francisco. The unpaved streets were so steep that planks had to be placed between the rails to give horses enough footing to pull the two Pullman built single truck cars of the AIA.

In June 1889, two Baldwin steam dummy locomotives arrived. These locomotives were built with all mechanical works hidden beneath a streetcar body to avoid scaring the horses. They were lettered for "Middletown Railway". By July of that year the dummies were pulling two double truck cars built by the St. Louis Car Company. Loops were built at Shurtleff College at the top of the line and at the foot of Market Street to expedite the turning of trains. In January 1889, AIA purchased

the Alton and Upper Alton line (A/UA/CC) and built a connection near Alton Union Station on the riverfront. A car barn was built on private right of way west of Franklin.

Joseph Porter incorporated the Alton Electric Street Railway in 1893. He then purchased the recently merged companies creating the Alton Railway and Illuminating Co. It was at this time that work began on the powerhouse at Sixth and Piasa Streets. The Panic of 1893 dried up the money supply and only one of the six intended boilers was installed.

By 1895, a new syndicate was formed and work began on electrifying the system. Five new cars were delivered by the St. Louis Car Co. in August 1895 which gave the combined street railways a roster of 10 trolleys, seven trailers, two steam dummies and two horses. With construction of a new line to North Alton from City Hall, up Piasa Street to West Third, and up State to Delmar, the system now had nine miles of track. It was at this time that the company opened Rock Springs Park to generate weekend and excursion revenue.

However, the line was unprofitable and was sold in 1899 and remained the Alton Railway, Gas and Electric Co. (ARG&E). The new consolidated Alton system began buying up city utility companies and by 1901 operated 18 cars and eight horses on 12½ miles of track.

In late 1912, the Alton and Eastern Railway extension from Alton to the State Hospital northeast of town passed under the Chicago and Alton Railroad (C&A) and was to have bridged over the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy, but after the failure to secure the power contract for the hospital the line was abandoned. The westbound lanes of the street, near the Chicago and Alton Depot, dipped extra low to allow for a streetcar to pass under the C&A.

In 1903, a company with a name almost longer than the line itself was started. The Alton and East Alton Railway and Passenger Co. built one mile of track running from Washington to Milton Road. Later that year Mr. Porter purchased the line and merged it with the ARG&E, creating the Alton Light and Traction Company. By the following year this new line had 18 cars, 8 horses and 16 miles of track.



## Venice, Madison and Granite City

The Venice, Madison and Granite City Railway was incorporated in October 1899. It was built from the Madison/Granite City corporate limits to the East St. Louis city limits. The line was built on Madison, Bessell, Klein and Short Streets. Parallel trackage was on Fourth and Fifth Streets as a long passing track and some private right of way ran on the north shoulder of St. Clair Ave. to Black Bridge in National City at the northern limits of East St. Louis. The line was completed in 1900. A three-car capacity car barn, built in 1898, was located at the corner of 14th and Madison. A three-stall car barn was also located on Broadway and Klein. Another car barn and powerhouse was located at Lee and Broadway just east of the C&A crossing.

The Granite City and Edwardsville Railway was incorporated in June 1901. It built a line to the east between Granite City and Horseshoe Lake. It opened in January 1902, but never reached Edwardsville, ending instead at Horseshoe



## OF MADISON COUNTY

Lake.

By 1903, all these lines were acquired by the Granite City and St. Louis (GC&StL) which with the consolidation had a fleet of 14 cars.

### Merging Alton and Granite City Lines

Work was also underway to link the Alton and Granite City lines. The AL&T had built a line from Alton to East Alton, and President J.F. Porter had his eye on the GC&StL which in 1904 was building toward East Alton, reaching Nameoki in April and Mitchell in June.

Porter offered to buy the GC&StL but owner Fred Allen would not sell. Instead the lines were consolidated with Porter as president and Allen as vice-president. With the addition of the Alton streetcar lines, the Alton, Granite City and St. Louis Traction (a holding company) created the Alton, Granite and St. Louis Railway (AG&StL) in February 1904.



*The Allen Line bridge southwest of Edwardsville. This photograph was also sold as a color tinted postcard. Sometimes the frames holding the electrical lines were removed to make a "prettier picture." (MCHS)*

### The Allen Line

Fred Allen then turned his attention to a Edwardsville, Alton and St. Louis line. Incorporated in 1905, the line connected with but was independent of the AG&StL. It ran from Mitchell on the AF&StL to Edwardsville, a distance of nine miles on private right of way and on streets in Edwardsville. A 1,100-foot long steel viaduct was used to cross the Illinois Terminal steam division on the west side of town. It reached the Madison County Court House by November of 1905. This line, built to North American Standard gauge, became part of the AG&StL in January 1907. It was known as the "Allen Line".

While the AG&StL cars reached the East St. Louis city limits via the Black Bridge line in National City, they could not enter downtown as the line could not cross the Traction Railroad Association (TRRA) tracks. Patrons had to walk across the tracks to transfer to an East St. Louis city car on the other side. The gap was never closed and passengers could not ride straight through until the streetcar service was replaced with buses much later.

The AG&StL powerhouse and carbarn was built in 1907 at 23rd and Madison Avenue in Granite City where the Horseshoe Lake and Coke Plant lines originated. The carbarn had a capacity for 16 cars and also served as the dispatcher's office. It was later used by the Illinois Terminal as a bus garage and was razed in 1941.

A second AG&StL carbarn was located at Yeager Park in Alton at Federal (Cut Street) and Milton (E. Broadway).

### Consolidation & A Standard Gauge Track

Consolidation of all these lines began in September 1901 when the St. Louis and Illinois Suburban was created. Reorganized as the East St. Louis and Suburban in February 1902, the new "Suburban" began its acquisitions of other lines. By 1904 consolidation was completed with the purchase of the Alton and Lebanon lines.

While consolidated on paper, not all of the parts of the system were of the same track gauge. Most of the interurban and streetcar lines had been laid with St. Louis Broad Gauge with a 4'10" width. This reflected their early years as properties of St. Louis streetcar interests with the idea that they would be merged with the United Railway System in St. Louis.

With the arrival of the McKinley Lines into the Metro East and diminishing influence by St. Louis interests a concerted effort was begun to standardize the gauge of the lines. Only the Lebanon Line, the Allen Line and the Day Line in Belleville were originally built using the North American Standard Gauge with a 4'8½" width. By 1905 some eight miles of streetcar, suburban and interurban trackage had been converted to the narrower gauge.

After becoming part of the Great East Side Railway, the AG&StL built a highspeed route between Granite City and East St. Louis to avoid the congestion of tracks laid in the streets. This was accomplished in two phases. The first part was a line built in 1905 linking streetcar trackage on Second and Madison in Madison, IL, with the East St. Louis trackage on 7th via private right of way. The TRRA, V&C, Pennsylvania



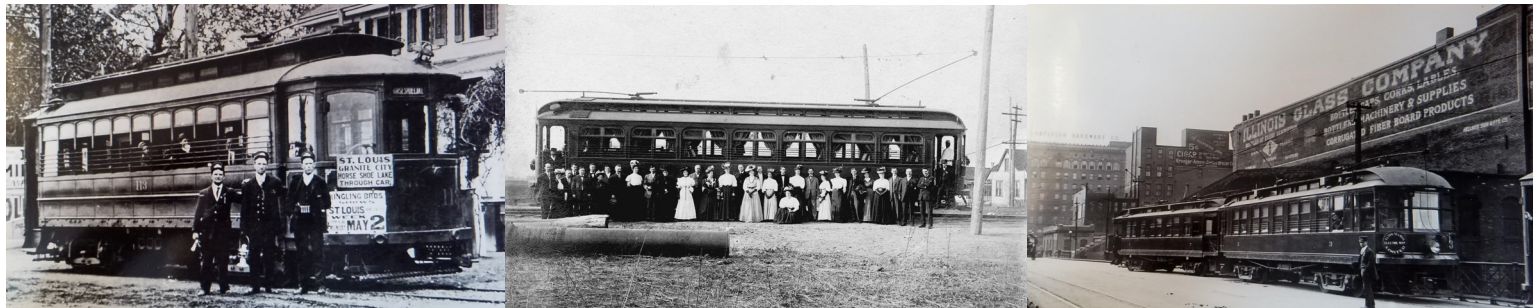
*The carbarn near Maryville's Buffalo Park. (Godwin)*

and the B&O were crossed at Willows Tower in East St. Louis using two through-truss spans 237 feet and 112 feet in length supported by concrete piers. In Madison, the Litchfield & Madison Railroad (L&M) and the Illinois Terminal (IT) were crossed at McCambridge with a three span through-steel truss bridge.

In early 1906, approximately 10,000 feet of track, mostly on private right of way and some on 20<sup>th</sup> Street was laid between the north end of the McCambridge viaduct and 20th Street in Granite City.

The Alton, Granite and St. Louis faced the same obstacle in reaching downtown East St. Louis as it had on the Black Bridge line. The L&N Railroad blocked the company from

*continued page 6*



*At left is the crew of car #113 bound for Horseshoe Lake. (St. Clair County Historical Society) The center photo is an excursion car. The Great East Side Railway had two parlor cars for excursions and group tours, named "The Mounds" and "The Bluffs". (MCHS) A two car Limited with Suburban cars #3 and #7 prepares to depart from the west end of Eads Bridge to Alton. (St. Clair County Historical Society)*

crossing its line at grade and legal action was required before it could be installed. By November 1906 cars were able to run all the way from Alton to East St. Louis.

After consolidation of the system, most of the original power houses were abandoned and a new main generating station was built in the East St. Louis Winstanley neighborhood.

By 1912, there were seven substations of brick and concrete construction each housing rotary convertors and related electrical equipment. They were located at Wood River, Maryville (Buffalo Park), Collinsville (Waters), O'Fallon (Ridge Prairie), Dewey (Signal Hill near Belleville), Ward in Belleville and Granite City.

Suburban cars carried portable telephones to enable the crews to communicate with the dispatcher and car shop. Poles spaced at approximately 1,600-foot intervals were equipped to allow the portable phones to be connected to the company line or to either of the two local phone companies.

The Suburban's rolling stock reflected not only the type of service provided, but also the fact that the system was a collection of numerous railways. In 1912 the Electric Railway Journal listed the following equipment: 21 interurban cars 55' in length, 26 suburban cars 46' in length, 103 city cars ranging in size from 32' to 42' in length (14 of these were pay-as-you-enter cars), 36 service cars, four express motors, two 50-ton freight motors, two steam locomotives and 900 coal hoppers.

Passenger service was provided by city cars, suburban cars and interurban car operations. In 1911 the Suburban operated 111 regular and tripper cars daily. With two lines meeting at Edwardsville a 42-mile circle was formed in the Metro East. Trains provided hourly service in both directions. The Alton line also had hourly service. Passenger stations/ticket offices in Alton were on Market Street in the Yeager Building. Other stations were in East Alton, Wood River, Hartford (brick building). Mitchell (wood frame structure with a lunchroom), Edwardsville (ticket office was in Delicate's Drug Store (corner of Hillsboro and Main) across from the courthouse and at Third and Broadway in East St. Louis. Missouri-bound travelers would transfer to bridge cars for the trip across the Mississippi to a two-track stub terminal on the west end of the Eads Bridge at the foot of Washington Street in downtown St. Louis.

### **Commuting and Excursions Possible**

Even more than its steam road counterparts, the electric trolley contributed to the growth of the rural areas near large cities allowing people to work in the city while residing in the suburbs. The Suburban was no exception, enabling shoppers to access downtown St. Louis. Excursions and weekend outings were made possible by the trolley. Popular destinations for city dwellers were the many parks along the right of way. Among these on the Suburban were Landsdowne Park in East St. Louis, Priesters Park in Belleville, Buffalo Park near Maryville and Horseshoe Lake near Granite City which featured

a dance pavilion. Yeager Park near Alton featured a racetrack as did Fairmont Park near Collinsville.

At the time of consolidation, the World's Fair was going on in St. Louis. The Suburban provided an alternative way to travel to the Fair avoiding the congestion at Union Station. Suburban cars would meet steam trains at Relay Depot in East St. Louis and transport passengers to St. Louis via Eads Bridge where they could board a St. Louis streetcar for the Fair. The Fair was closed on Sundays so the Suburban then offered popular excursions to Illinois. St. Louis being "dry" on Sundays no doubt also helped business.

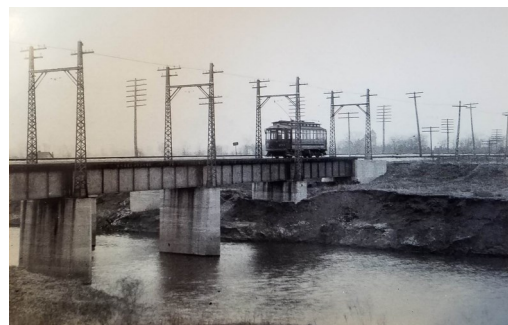
The Suburban also did business carrying freight. In 1902 the Interurban Express Company was created by Mr. Day and was controlled by Belleville merchants. Later Alton businessmen would buy shares in the company. The Suburban would provide four express motor cars and crews for the trains which ran non-scheduled extra trains on all lines. In East St. Louis the express depot was located on West Broadway in the shadow of Eads Bridge near the river front. In Alton the express depot was on the south side of Broadway at Oak Street.

Great East Side Railway dispatchers were based in East St. Louis in a building at the wye track on the elevated structure at Willows. The Trainmaster also acted as chief dispatcher and supervised two dispatchers during the day. Two additional dispatchers worked nights. They worked a double-faced cordless switchboard using Blake dispatchers and signal equipment.

### **Illinois Traction System (ITS)**

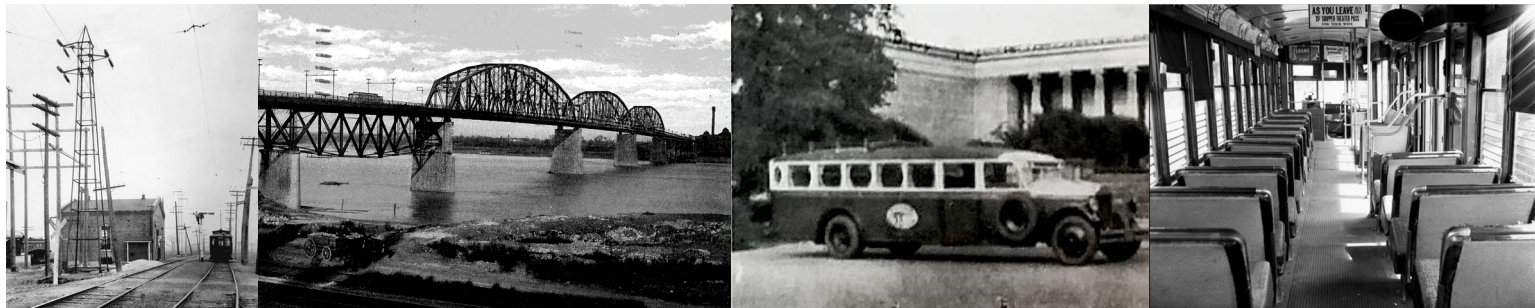
The Illinois Traction System was a subsidiary of the St. Louis & North Eastern. The first cars arrived in Edwardsville in late December 1905 with Granite City-Edwardsville service starting in late January 1906. The Traction's goal was to reach St. Louis either via the TRRA's Eads or Merchants bridges but several obstacles prevented this. The City of East St. Louis refused to grant a franchise to enter the city on private right of way and the TRRA refused access to either bridge.

The short-term solution was to secure trackage rights over the Suburban from Granite City to East St. Louis. After November 1906 the ITS had access to the Suburban's passenger depot on Third and Broadway in East St. Louis. However, St. Louis was still out of reach as the TRRA banned ITS cars from using rails laid on the wagon deck of the Eads claiming their cars were too



*An Alton Line car crossing Cahokia Creek (Godwin)*





*From left, Car #100 has taken a siding next to the Wood River substation. (St. Clair County Historical Society). McKinley Bridge, a steel-truss bridge completed in 1910, was built to carry electric railway traffic. Wings were added to the sides of the bridge in 1926 to accommodate auto traffic. (Cheryl Jett) A "Blue Goose" parlor coach typical of those used by the Suburban beginning in 1925. (Godwin). The interior of one of the later streetcars that ran between Granite City and St. Louis. (Greg McGee)*

heavy. Traction passengers had to transfer to city streetcars for the last leg of their journey to Missouri.

Though some Suburban interurban cars (#51-58) and the new 60 series cars were allowed on the Eads Bridge, freight cars were out of the question. Even the Suburban's own express motors had been banned from the Eads.

### A New Mississippi River Bridge

The real solution for ITS was to build its own bridge. Construction began on the McKinley Bridge between Venice and St. Louis in August 1907. The first inspection car crossed under its own power on Sept. 30, 1910.

By early October all ITS cars were using the new bridge and terminating at their new station at 12th and Lucas in St. Louis. Alton, Granite and St. Louis continued using the Eads until March of 1921 when some cars began using trackage rights over the McKinley Bridge also. The ITS continued to run one train to East St. Louis daily to protect the franchise after all other traffic was diverted to the McKinley.

### Bus Service Begins

Bus service provided by the Suburban started Sept. 22, 1925. The new "Blue Goose" bus service had 28 buses offering 32 round trips daily between St. Louis and Alton. The Traction began its own bus service the following year in part to compete with the Blue Goose and in part to replace their old 900-class bridge cars. The Blue Goose buses were serviced at the Suburban's Winstanley Shops car barn.

Rising costs brought on by World War I inflation cut into Alton, Granite and St. Louis profits causing it to default on its bonds in August 1918. The company went into receivership the following year. The Suburban elected to sell off the Alton high-speed line to a local business group which renamed the road as the St. Louis and Alton in June 1926.

The Illinois Terminal Railroad System, itself the result of a 1927 merger of several small steam railroads and the Illinois Traction, began leasing the St. Louis and

Alton in June 1930 and purchased it outright in 1940. After that, most of the St. Louis and Alton trains were rerouted over the McKinley Bridge. The Mitchell-Edwardsville segment became redundant for the IT. With ridership almost nil and the mainline of the IT running parallel just to the south, the IT abandoned the line on Feb. 1, 1932.

The Alton streetcar system was sold to IT subsidiary Illinois Terminal Transportation Co. in March 1932. Streetcar service could not compete with buses and automobiles and ended in August 1936. Casting off the St. Louis and Alton did not stem the tide of red ink for the Suburban. Fares were increased to handle the mandated increase in wages for employees, but revenue did not keep pace. Ownership of the company passed to the North American Company in August 1922. The Union Electric Company, the major supplier of power for the St. Louis area bought the Suburban in September 1928, but by then the passenger era was all but over. Earnings and ridership continued to fall and bus service began to replace electric operations on the branch lines.

### The Yellow Hammer

To provide high speed service between Alton and St. Louis, the AG&StL purchased three cars from the American Car Company. Painted yellow with multiple-unit control and equipped with field taps on the motors (allowing speeds of 85+ mph), they produced a hammering sound on the rail joints and switches earning them the nicknames of "Yellow Hammers". The St. Louis and Alton line was often referred to as the Yellow Hammer Line.

### A Reminder of Earlier Times

While the East St. Louis & Suburban Railway has been gone for many years, people in the Metro East still recall the days when their transportation needs were met by Yellow Hammers. Today, former Terminal Railroad Association tracks on the Eads Bridge carry a new generation of light rail trolleys.

### Yellow Hammer Cars

For a time, the IT leased Suburban equipment for use on the St. Louis and Alton line. Numbers 35, 39-42 were 45-foot long wood cars each with a seating capacity of 46. Numbers 51-58 were 52-foot long wood cars each seating 56. All these cars were deemed obsolete and were returned to the Suburban in 1936 with the exception of two cars destroyed in accidents while running on the IT.

The first three cars (#s 60, 61 and 62) were built in 1917. They were furnished with carpet and wicker chairs. Two additional cars (#s 63 & 64), were built in 1923. All were double-ended cars (controls at each end to facilitate turning at terminals) with central entrance doors. Car # 63 was originally a "half motor" with only two motors instead of the usual four and was used as a trailer with other cars of this class. Car # 64 was originally use as a parlor car and as such had two motors.

Following the Illinois Terminal acquisition of the St. Louis and Alton, these cars were renumbered 100-104. Following a wreck in 1945 the former # 63 was rebuilt as a full motor car. The former parlor car, now # 104, was rebuilt at IT's Decatur car shop into a four-motor coach.

Four cars were built for the Suburban in 1924 by the St. Louis Car Company for use originally on the Belleville Line. Numbered 70-73, these cars were nearly identical to a large class of cars the StLCC built for California's Pacific Electric. These Hollywood cars, as they were often called, were renumbered 470-473 after the IT purchased the line. Found stranded on isolated track at the former Suburban car barn at the base of the bluffs near Collinsville, these cars had to be trucked by semi to the nearest electrified track in Granite City. They cars served out the rest of their lives on the IT in occasional bridge car service until the end of streetcar operations in 1958.



# Madison County Historical Society

*Opening Doors to Madison County History*

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## ELECTRIC RAILWAYS OF MADISON COUNTY (CONT. FROM PAGE 7)



John McGee, Granite City, was a streetcar motorman for the Illinois Terminal Railroad. He is pictured here in front of Car 455. John was forced to retire on June 18, 1958 when the streetcars stopped running. With the streetcars no longer available, he purchased his first automobile. He was 75 years old. (Greg McGee)

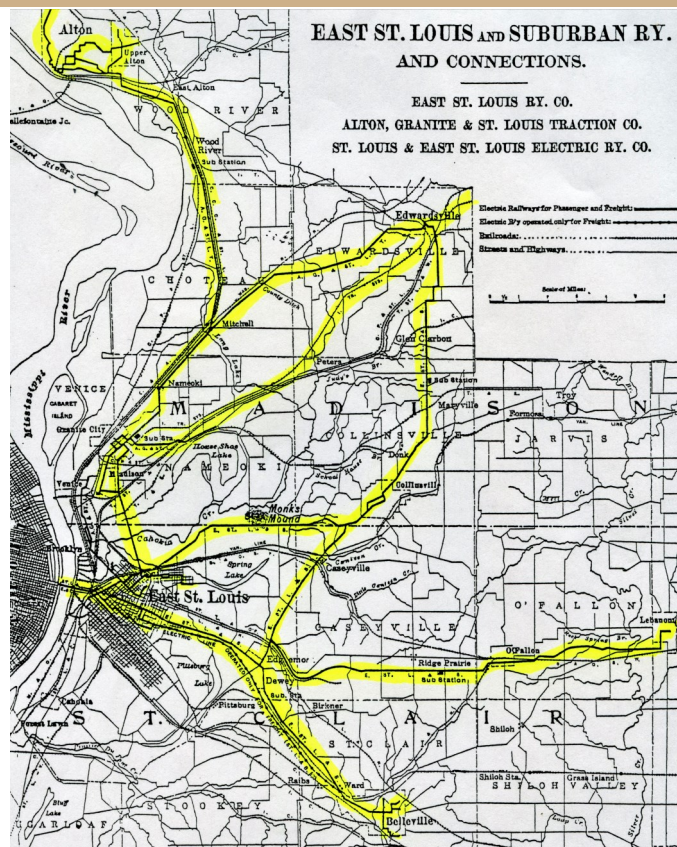
### MCHS CALENDAR

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 2 P.M.

ABOLITIONIST ELIJAH P. LOVEJOY

Presenter: Stephen Hansen

Immanuel United Methodist Church, 800 N. Main Street, Edwardsville



Madison County streetcar routes are highlighted in yellow on this undated electric railway map. (Godwin)

**BEST WISHES FOR A SAFE AND HAPPY HOLIDAY SEASON!**