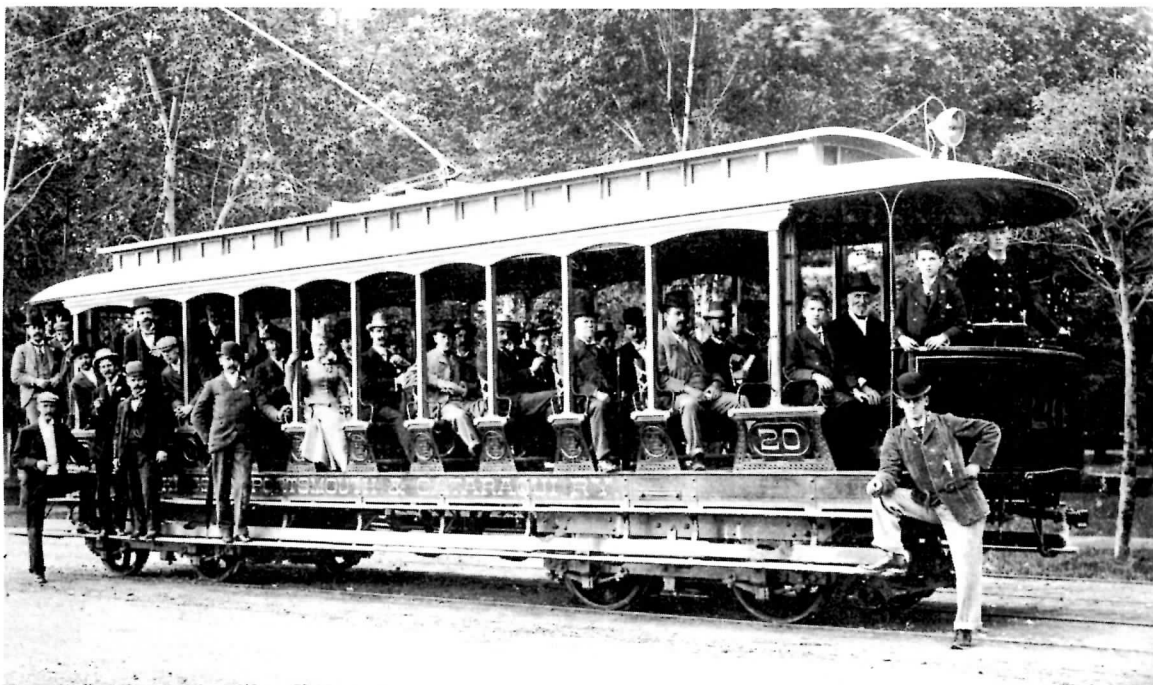


# KINGSTON, PORTSMOUTH and CATARAQUI

## ELECTRIC RAILWAY



Car 20 in 1903 at Macdonald Park (King St. east of Barrie)  
From an original which hung in the Company Office.

The city of Kingston, Ontario, stands on a site which has been of importance since the earliest days of European civilization in North America. The first settlement on the site occurred in July 1673, when French forces under the great Governor Frontenac of New France in four days built the fort that afterwards bore his name, in order to display the white man's might to the Iroquois Indians who had come for a conference. Fort Frontenac was an important centre of the fur trade and, after the English conquest, was renamed Kingston and became an important trade and communications centre. In due course there arose a thriving town whose importance was increased by the completion of the Rideau Canal connecting Lake Ontario at Kingston with the Ottawa River at Bytown, later to be renamed Ottawa. The Canal, opened in 1832, was built to enable water-borne commerce to travel from the Great Lakes to Montreal via the Ottawa River without danger from the supposedly hostile American shore of the St. Lawrence River. It is still in use as a very popular cruise route. Kingston was also at one time the capital of the Province of Canada, and was the home of Sir John A. Macdonald, the first Prime Minister of the Dominion of Canada.

By 1876 the town had developed to the point where public transportation was feasible. Accordingly on February 10 of that year the Kingston Street Railway Co. was incorporated under a perpetual franchise; the first horse car was operated on Princess Street on February 2, 1877. Very little is known about the horse car days in Kingston, as the Company does not seem to have been outstanding in any way and the few pictures surviving show typical horse cars of the day. The car shed and stables were located behind the building at 493 Princess Street.

On May 27, 1893, the Company was reconstituted as the Kingston Portsmouth & Cataraqui Street Railway, with the intention of electrifying and extending the line. The new charter involved a 40-year franchise, and provided that the railway could be worked by "electricity, ammonia, compressed air or by such other motive power as may hereafter be agreed upon." Four years later the company was renamed Kingston Portsmouth & Cataraqui Electric Railway, with broader powers. The first electric cars were built by the little-known firm of Patterson & Corbin in St. Catharines, Ont. (This company failed in 1897). Rebuilding of the light horse-car track began on July 2, 1893, and the inauguration of electric operation took place on Princess Street late in September, 1893. The first electric car was driven by a Miss Kathleen Hardy and, since the day was wet and the street paved only with granite blocks, considerable sputtering and arcing occurred on the muddy rails, which is reported to have "terrorized" many onlookers. Sunday service was at first provided, and is recorded as having met with "considerable opposition"; it was discontinued about 1910.

The new company undertook a number of extensions, to Portsmouth in 1894 and to the Grand Trunk Station (known as "Outer Station", now C.N.R.) in 1898, and reached its greatest extent (8.0 miles) with the completion of the last link in the Belt Line shortly thereafter. Extensions to Cataraqui, Gananoque and Batavia were never undertaken.

The company at first experienced considerable success, so that additional cars were purchased in 1894 and 1895 from Canadian General Electric Co., Peterborough, Ont., which at that time manufactured complete cars rather than merely their electrical equipment. In-

cluded in these orders was a deluxe car about which tantalizingly little is known apart from the following note, "It is said that the Company.....will place this car at the disposal of those who wish to attend the opera etc. in full dress and who are willing to pay for the extra accommodation."

In 1897 the first of many disputes with the City government occurred. The Williamsville line extended west from Alfred St. into what was then almost undeveloped territory. This line was never successful and as early as 1897 was not operated during the winter months. The Company was taken to court by the City in an attempt to force year-round operation, but the case was dismissed. Moving forward in our story for a moment it is worth noting that the Williamsville line, which never had better than half-hourly service, was abandoned in 1910.

By 1900 the system was complete, and was enjoying its only brief period of prosperity. The following description was printed in the trade press of the day: "The street railway of Kingston, extending to Williamsville on the north, to Portsmouth directly in front of the asylum and penitentiary on the east, and a branch line connecting with the Grand Trunk Railway depot on the west, is one of the most modernly equipped in Canada. The Company has a capital stock of \$200,000. The road is well laid out....., made of T-rail, 55 to 65 lb. to the yard. Current is supplied by the Kingston Light Heat & Power Co from the power house on Queen St. to the 19 handsome cars of modern upholstery and furnishings." Apart from the fact that the writer's directions are hopelessly confused, this is an interesting description.

In 1902 four cars and an assortment of spare parts were purchased from the abandoned Belleville Traction Co.

In another dispute with the City in 1905 over extension of double track when the franchise permitted only single track, the Company simply suspended service since the same franchise required a car only every six months. It may be assumed that the Company, which was insolvent at the time, used this as an excuse to end operation. After several months of idleness, the trustees for the bondholders took control of the property and offered to sell it to the City for \$125,000. This offer was rejected. They then sold it to a group of Kingston citizens who resumed the operation, though it was never profitable at any time during the rest of its life. The reorganized Company reduced the capitalization to \$90,000.

On January 13, 1909 a fire broke out in the carhouse, and two cars were destroyed. They were not replaced but the carhouse was reconstructed.

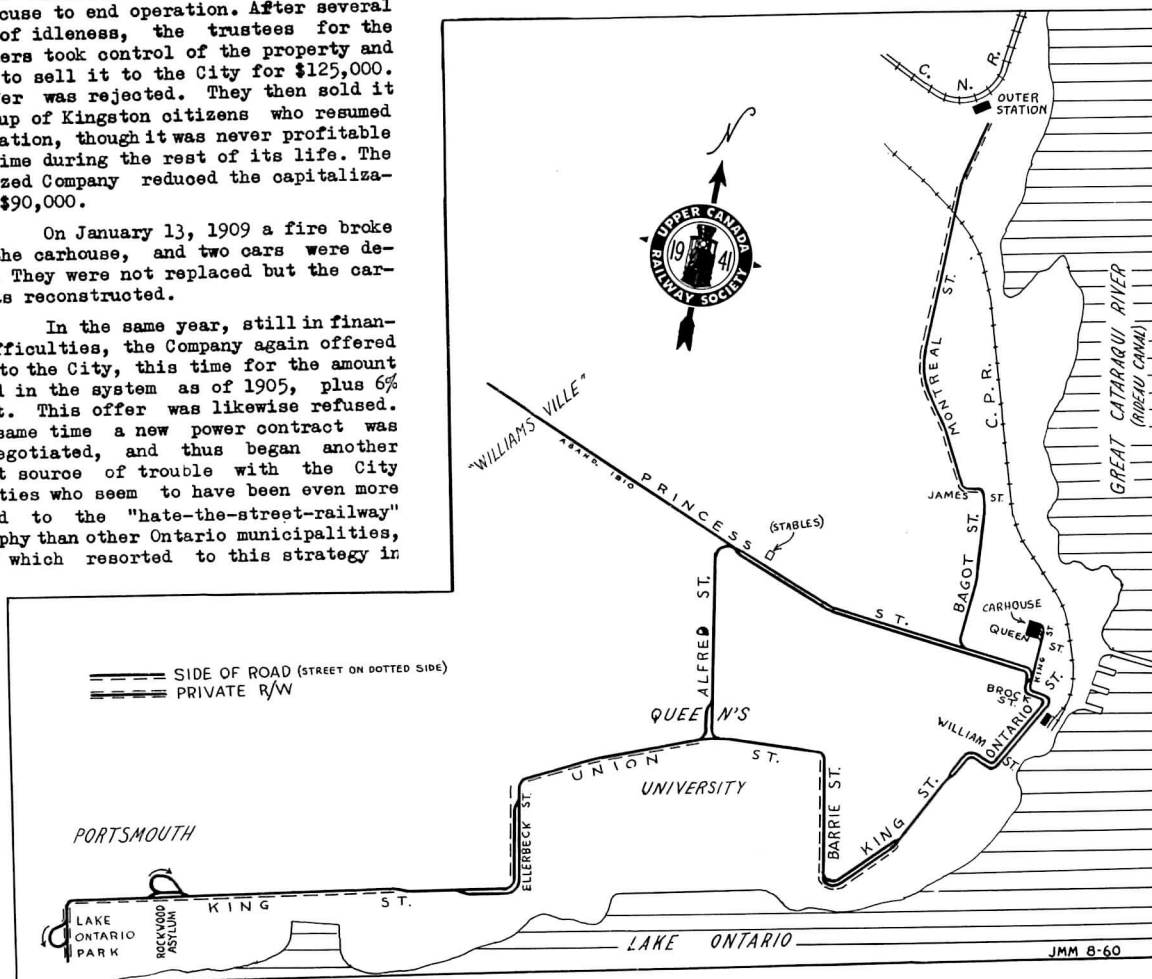
In the same year, still in financial difficulties, the Company again offered to sell to the City, this time for the amount invested in the system as of 1905, plus 6% interest. This offer was likewise refused. At the same time a new power contract was being negotiated, and thus began another frequent source of trouble with the City authorities who seem to have been even more addicted to the "hate-the-street-railway" philosophy than other Ontario municipalities, most of which resorted to this strategy in

an attempt to obtain public support for themselves at the expense of the street railway. In this case, the City had taken over the Kingston Light Heat & Power Co. and was trying to raise power rates by 25%, an additional expense that the railway could not afford. The City refused to grant more than a 3-year contract unless it was terminable on six months' notice thereafter. This was unsatisfactory to the Company, which suspended service on Nov. 23 1909, and began to dismantle some track at the carhouse. A settlement was quickly reached, and service was resumed four days later.

About 1912 the City of Kingston began to pave its streets, and the Company found it necessary to relay and improve its trackage on such streets when ordered to do so by the City. In 1914 part of the line on Princess Street was double-tracked and relaid with 90-lb. rails on a concrete base provided by the City. Here again a dispute arose over the specifications of this concrete base, and a Montreal Tramways Co. official was called in to arbitrate. In 1922 and 1923 another mile of track was relaid in connection with further paving.

During the War costs increased greatly. In 1916 trainmen's wages were increased to \$1.90 a day, and in the following year manpower was so scarce that 11 women were hired as conductors. The women were paid \$2.25 per day, an increase of 20% in a year. In an attempt to provide additional revenue, the ticket rate was changed from 6 for 25¢ to 5 for 25¢ in 1916, the cash fare remaining at 5¢. In 1920 tickets were abolished and the nickel reigned supreme. Three years later fares were further increased to 7¢ cash, 4 tickets for 25¢, with workmen's tickets, valid only in rush hours, at 6 for 25¢. The old 5¢ fare was restored, however, in 1927 to attract additional business. A 75¢ weekly pass was introduced in 1926.

Also in 1926, the Company again offered to sell out to the City. It was a locally-owned enterprise and was being operated without hope of profit-making purely as a public service. The Company noted at the time that no dividend had ever been paid on the common stock, yet \$25,000 had recently been spent on track rehabilitation



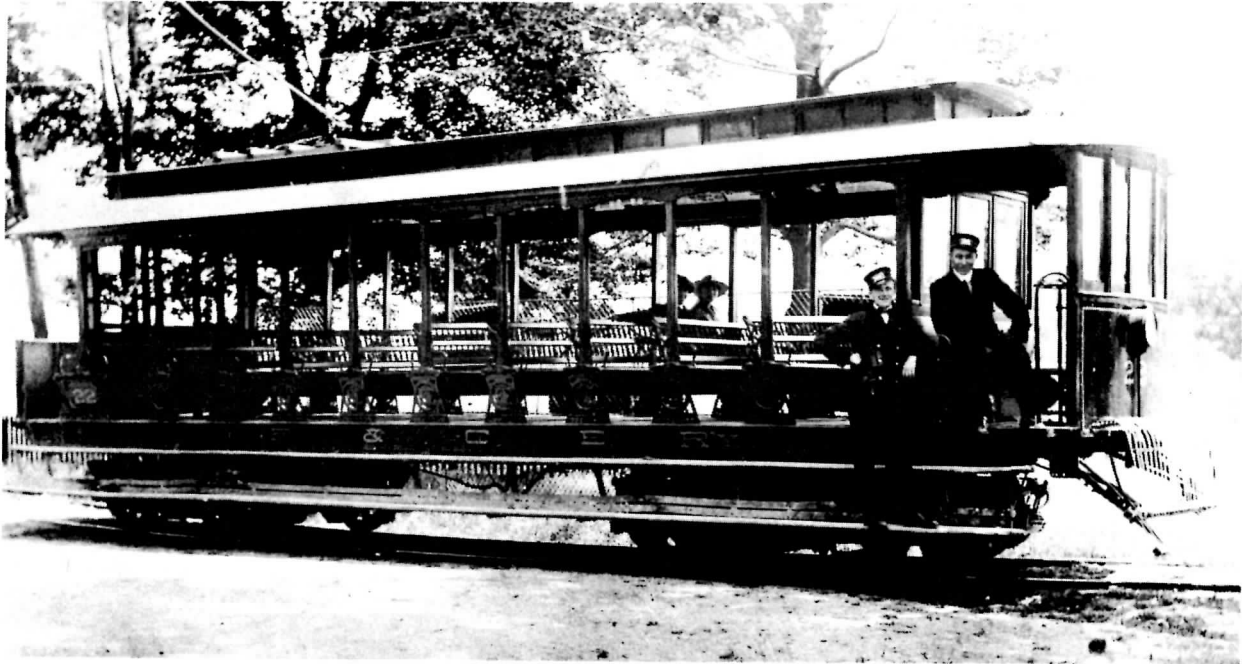
in paved streets. It was never possible to establish a depreciation fund and, while interest payments had been met, returns were small and an operating deficit had been constant since 1920. It was difficult, the Company said, to state how long the present situation could endure, since it had lived a hand-to-mouth existence for 30 years.

No reply was received from the City.

At this point yet another dispute arose over power rates. A contract made in 1916 with the Kingston Public Utilities Commission specified that the Company would be billed for power at cost, and that any reductions in the cost of producing the power would be passed on to the Company. The rate established in 1916 was \$1.20 per KWH, but by 1926 the P.U.C. had ceased to generate its own power and had become, in common with almost all other similar undertakings, a distributor of power pro-

the power before the cars could be moved to safety. 11 closed cars and 9 open cars were destroyed, only one closed car, a sweeper and a work car being saved. This proved to be the end of the K.P.&C. Four days later at an emergency meeting of the City Council, W.F. Nickle, the President, stated that while the Company had intended to operate until 1934, it was now forced to abandon, since restoration of the service was out of the question. The Company offered to sell the entire system to the City as scrap for \$5500, except for Lake Ontario Park in Portsmouth, for which the price was \$60,000. A 60-day agreement for a temporary bus service was made with Colonial Coach Lines Ltd. while the future of the street railway was debated.

A survey showed that \$325,000 would be required to rehabilitate the line (including 10 used lightweight steel cars) and, if a 5¢ fare were contin-



Car 22 at Lake Ontario Park. (All photos from R.J. Clench, Kingston)

duced by the Hydro-Electric Power Commission of Ontario. This spectacularly successful public utility had so decreased power costs that when the P.U.C. offered a new contract at 75¢ per KWH the Company refused to accept it on the basis that this was still above the new cost to the P.U.C. which, however, refused to acknowledge the actual cost of the power. Negotiations dragged on to the point where four months later the Company announced that service would be suspended on April 30, 1927, unless a satisfactory contract were signed. This finally produced an agreement in which the P.U.C. admitted that the Company was correct and had been overcharged for many months. The P.U.C. therefore agreed to pay \$15,000 in lieu of power rate reductions to which the Company had been entitled, to wipe out 15 months unpaid power bills totalling \$4,200, and to fix the new power rate at 65¢ per KWH. The Company then announced that it would continue operations until the end of its franchise period in 1934.

February 10, 1927, was the 50th anniversary of street railway service in Kingston, and the Company, despite its precarious financial situation, announced that the gross receipts for the day would be devoted to charity. The sum of \$199.95 was taken in on the cars, so the Superintendent added another 5¢ from his own pocket, and the total of \$200.00 was turned over to a committee for distribution.

Operations continued unchanged until the early morning of March 1, 1930, when fire broke out in the carhouse. Starting in the carpenter shop, it quickly spread to the rest of the structure, interrupting

used, an annual deficit of \$18,000 could be expected. It was therefore decided to abandon the line outright, and a formal agreement was made with the Kingston City Coach Co., a Colonial Coach subsidiary, for local service which continues to the present.

The sweeper saved from the fire was sold to the Cornwall Street Railway Light & Power Co. as their No. 2. It survived until after World War II, the only K.P.&C. car to see further service.

Track on private right-of-way was removed by the Company, the first spike in the dismantling being drawn by H.C. Nickle, the Superintendent, on June 18, 1930. Trackage in paved streets was purchased as scrap by the City, and removed or paved over. The last rail was not removed until the winter 1940 - 41, when it was used to lay a railway siding to a new wartime manufacturing plant.

And thus passed the last signs of the Kingston Portsmouth and Cataraqui, never profitable, always in difficulties, but operated as long as possible by a public-spirited local management determined to provide a necessary service as long as it was physically able to do so. The fact that the line survived until 1930 in the face of what appears to be deliberate non-cooperation by the City, is a great tribute to the Nickle family who were largely in control of the line in its last years.



Two of the wartime female conductors, 1917



Kingston Street Railway horse car, King & Brock Sts.

## ROLLING STOCK

Almost nothing is known of the technology of K.P.&C. equipment, owing to its extreme age and to the loss of all company records. Cars were originally built by Patterson & Corbin of St.Catharines, Ont., or by Canadian General Electric in Peterborough, and many were later rebuilt by the Rathbun Co. in Deseronto, Ont. Taylor trucks predominated, and most cars were equipped with G.E. 800, 1000 or 67 motors. No equipment was ever equipped with air brakes. Cars built as open cars had odd numbers; closed cars had even numbers.

### CLOSED CARS (Single truck):

All built originally with double-end control and open platforms. All but 13, 15 and 23 were later rebuilt as single-end cars and had the platforms closed in. Still later the cars were modified for the pay-as-you-leave

system, with front entrance. Car 13 was indeed unlucky, being wrecked in a grade-crossing accident on Montreal Street.

Curve-side cars: 5,9,13,23. (23 ex Belleville 1902)  
Straight-side cars (rebuilt): 7,11,15,17,19,21.

### OPEN CARS (Single truck, formerly trailers):

6,8,10,12,24,26,28. (Last 3 ex Belleville 1902)

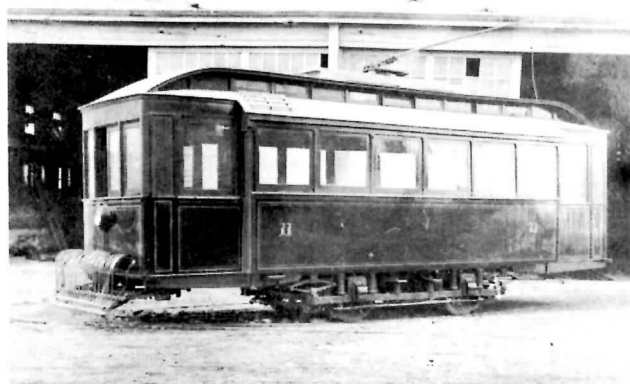
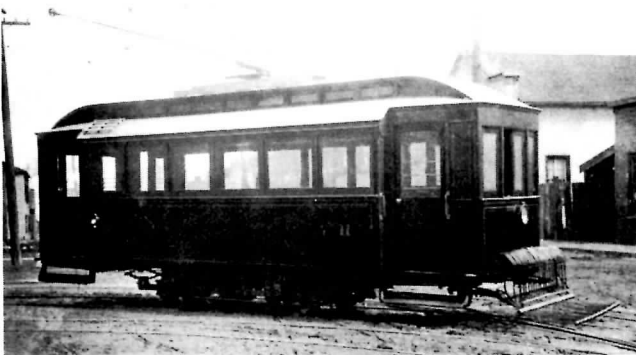
All but 12 and 24 later rebuilt as single-end cars.

### OPEN CARS (Double truck):

14,16,18,20,22. One truck motorized. 18,20 and 22 later rebuilt closed cars with centre exit, front entrance.

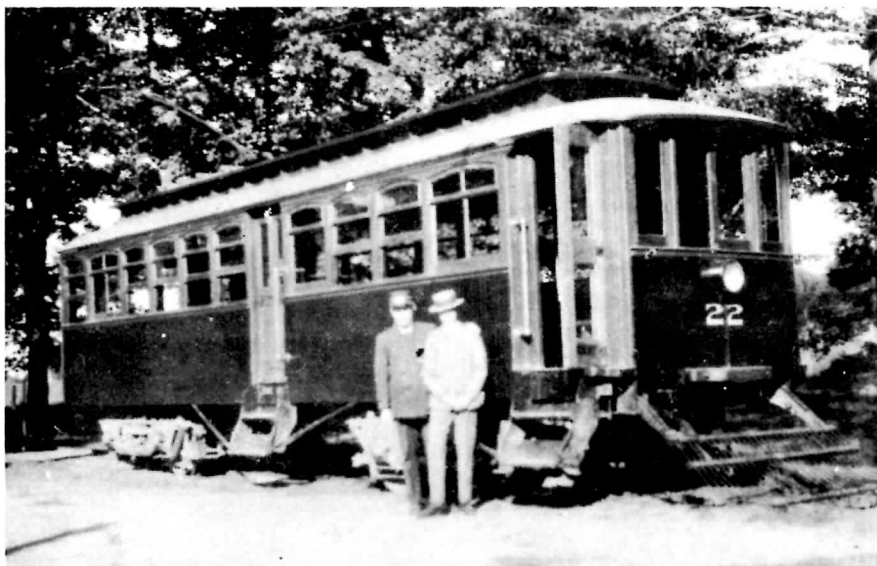
### SERVICE CARS:

Single-truck box motor. Two single-truck sweepers. Double-truck flat motor with two small cabs, survived fire and used in dismantling of line.



Two views of closed car 11 after rebuilding by the Rathbun Co., 1922





Closed car 22 rebuilt from open car of same number, at Lake Ontario Park.

## SERVICE

Four routes were operated:

**PORTSMOUTH.** The main line of the system. From Asylum loop (in summer from Lake Ontario Park) eastwards looping clockwise via Alfred, Princess etc. Original 20-minute service was increased to 10-minute about 1914. Four cars required in winter, five in summer. The double-truck cars were always used on this line, assisted as necessary by smaller cars. Some excursion business was done from the steamer docks on Ontario St. to Lake Ontario Park; also a small amount of freight was carried between the C.P.R. station and the "Malt House" on King St. in Portsmouth. In periods of heavy traffic it was necessary to "double" the trips every ten minutes, as the track layout did not permit more frequent service.

**BELT LINE.** Ran counter-clockwise around the same loop as Portsmouth cars. 10-minute service after about 1914, two cars of the group 6,8,12,25,28 usually used.

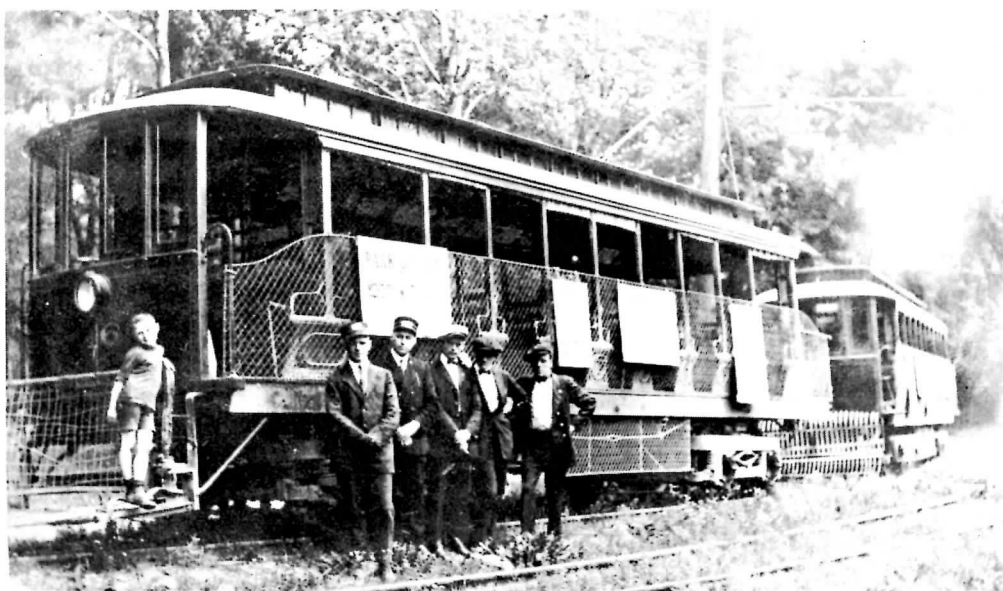
**BAGOT ST.** One-car shuttle between Princess St. and the "Outer Station" (Grand Trunk, later C.N.R.). 20-minute service. No turnouts on line. Unprotected level crossing

with Kingston & Pembroke branch of C.P.R.; the conductor had to dismount and flag the car across. Car 12 or 24 usually used in summer.

**WILLIAMSVILLE.** West from Princess & Alfred Sts. 30-minute service in summer only. Abandoned in 1910.

Despite the basically single-track layout of the system, considerable flexibility in service was assured by the long turnouts and the presence of double track on downtown streets; waits at meeting points were the exception rather than the rule. Every ten minutes a triple meet occurred at Alfred & Union Sts. when inbound and outbound Portsmouth cars met a Belt Line car.

It is interesting to note that regular Sunday service was given only in very early years. On occasion, when an event of general interest was taking place in the city, a limited service would be provided; this resulted in litigation on a few occasions as it was said to be contrary to the Sunday "Blue Laws", which stated that Sunday service could be provided only in connection with other means of transportation and not for "mere gain."



Open car 16 at corner of King & Barrie Sts., 1919.

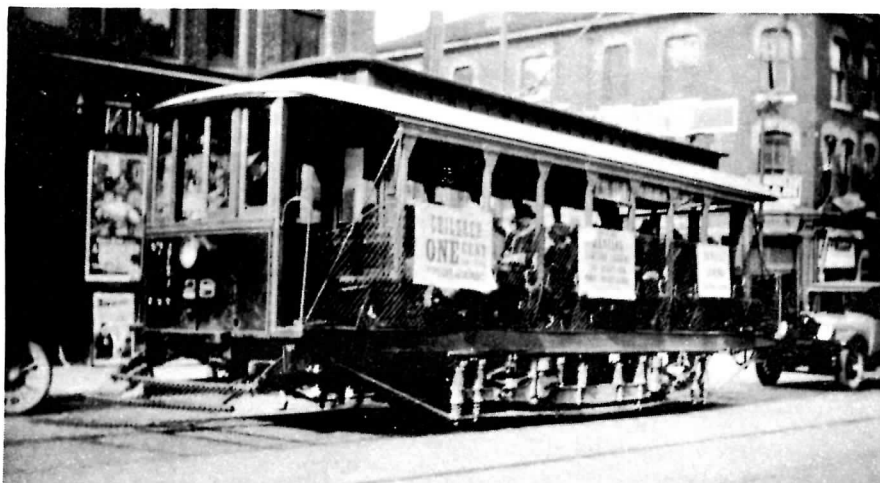
# BELLEVILLE TRACTION Co.

BELLEVILLE, ONTARIO

One of the very few "Traction Companies" in Canada, and the first street railway to be abandoned, was the Belleville Traction Co. The City of Belleville is located about half-way between Toronto and Kingston on the shore of the Bay of Quinté. When the Grand Trunk Railway built between Toronto and Montreal in 1856, it passed some distance to the north of the town, and accordingly in 1877 the Belleville Street Railway opened a horse-car line from the Grand Trunk Station to the Government dock, a distance of about 2½ miles. The fares were 6 for 25¢, and the company owned 5 cars and 16 horses. In 1895 a new company was formed, the Belleville Traction Co., which proceeded to electrify the line and relay the track with iron rails under a 20-year franchise which exempted it from taxation and permitted the company to suspend service between December and March of each year. The electrification was entirely accomplished by Canadian General Electric, which supplied one closed car and three open cars. Despite consideration of a conduit or stud-contact system, ordinary overhead construction was used. Service was hourly.

hoped in that year to extend the line west through a superior residential district to a large cemetery on the western edge of the town, and to generate power by damming the Moira River which the line paralleled. An attempt was made to finance these improvements by a bond issue, but this was a total failure and the company in its unsatisfactory condition became unable to meet interest payments. The property was offered for sale in March 1900 and July 1901, but no bids were received. Finally on September 12, 1901, it passed into the hands of its creditors and was closed down forthwith. The few assets were sold to a local syndicate which considered making a few improvements and trying to sell it as a going concern, but did not do so. The four cars, plus two trucks (the origin of which is unknown) and five spare motors, were sold to the Kingston Portsmouth and Cataraqui.

In 1903 a promoter from Cleveland proposed to the City Council that he be permitted to use the Traction Company's rails, which were still in place, for



Former Belleville Traction Car as K.P.&C. 28, on Princess St., 1928.  
(J.M.Mills Photo)

Much mystery surrounds the rolling stock of the Belleville Traction Co. A photograph, unsuitable for reproduction, shows a single-truck closed car numbered 8 pulling an open trailer; it is not even certain that this picture represents the Canadian Belleville Traction Co. as there was another line with the same name in Illinois. The disposition of the company's horse cars is unknown since apparently the electric cars were newly built; by 1899, furthermore, two of the open cars seem to have been converted to trailers.

By 1898 the company was in financial difficulties. The line did not serve the residential section of the town, which lay principally to the east and west of Front St. on which the tracks were laid. It was

operation of a horse-car service, on the understanding that if patronage was sufficient, the line would again be electrified in two years' time and would be extended to form a belt line. Preferring no service at all to the humiliation of stepping back into the horse-car days, the Council refused his request, and the rails were removed and sold to the Belleville Portland Cement Co. which was building a large new plant at Point Anne, a few miles east of the town, involving a railway to connect it with the Grand Trunk main line. This line was built under the name of the Belleville Radial Railway, but was not a common carrier. It was operated as an electric switching line by the Canada Cement Co. until about 1951.



## Upper Canada Railway Society

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