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Article Title: Interurban Projects in Nebraska

Full Citation: E Bryant Phillips, "Interurban Projects in Nebraska," *Nebraska History* 30 (1949): 163-182

URL of article: <http://www.nebraskahistory.org/publish/publicat/history/full-text/NH1949InterurbanNebr.pdf>

Date: 12/06/2016

Article Summary: Many an interurban line died in the promotional and blueprint stage. Even the Omaha, Lincoln, and Beatrice Railway, the most promising of the interurban projects, found it impossible to compete with buses and private automobiles.

Note: See the related article "Interurban Projects In and Around Omaha":

<http://www.nebraskahistory.org/publish/publicat/history/full-text/NH1949InterurbanOmaha.pdf>

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Cataloging Information:

Names: Frank Woods, Mark W Woods, W E Sharp, I L Lyman, W C Kenyon. E C Hurd, J E Riley, William B McKinley

Lines Discussed: Citizens Interurban Railway Company; Lincoln, Capitol Beach, and Milford Railway; Belmont and Northern Railway Company; Omaha, Lincoln, and Beatrice Railway

Other Transportation Companies Mentioned: Lincoln Traction Company, Lincoln and Salt Lake Railway, Lincoln City Electric Railway, Home Street Railway, Omaha and Council Bluffs Street Railway, Nebraska Traction and Power Company (renamed the Omaha and Lincoln Railway and Light Company)

Keywords: steam railroad charter, Missouri Pacific, Northern Construction Company, Commonwealth Power Company, fares, transfers

Interurban Projects in Nebraska

By E. Bryant Phillips

IF the term interurban is taken to mean an electric railway line connecting two cities, and if a city is defined as a sizeable place of perhaps ten thousand population or more, then there was never an interurban line in Nebraska. Many an interurban died in the promotional and blueprint stage. Several developed to the point of laying rails from an urban area into the suburbs, and having stopped there for one reason or another, served for a time as suburban lines. Of these interurban promotions and the resulting suburban lines many contemporary news items have been gleaned. The following is devoted to interurban projects in and around Lincoln. An account of similar projects near Omaha, South Sioux City, and Hastings will be published at a later date.

Citizens Interurban Railway Company

An example of the misuse of the term interurban is apparent in the brief episode of the Citizens Interurban Railway in Lincoln. This company evolved from a commercial club committee meeting and at first mention was to become a million dollar corporation with a line out of Lincoln via College View to Auburn and Falls City.¹ Six months later this scheme had settled down to a \$55,000 corporation with the same management as the Citizens Railway and with intentions of building a line to College View at once.² Some of the promoters and

¹*Lincoln Daily Star*, December 6, 19, 1907.

²Albert Watkins in *Lincoln Daily News*, November 14, 1909.

directors (Frank Woods and Mark W. Woods) of the Citizens Interurban Railway owned real estate between Lincoln and College View and the proposed line was to follow a two mile boulevard (150 feet wide) to be laid out.³ The company exercised its right of condemnation to acquire the property it needed,⁴ and after building a bridge over the Rock Island Railroad, the line was opened for service.⁵ This "highline" to College View was immediately popular with Lincolnites who sought pleasure in the long and relatively scenic street car rides. The Lincoln Traction Company's "low line" to College View via Normal was distinctly second rate thereafter.

The Citizens Interurban Railway was merged with the Lincoln Traction Company in 1909 as was its parent company the Citizens Railway.⁶ The financial arrangements involving the "interurban" were not distinct since they formed a part of the larger deal.⁷ As Lincoln's Sheridan Boulevard district filled in with the finest homes in the city, the "high line" to College View lost all pretense of being an interurban. But that line shared the distinction with one on Randolph street as one of the last street car lines to be operated in Lincoln.

Lincoln, Capitol Beach, and Milford Railroad

Capitol Beach is an amusement park less than three miles west of Lincoln's business district. In 1892 the \$25,000 Lincoln and Salt Lake Railway, had crossed the "salt bottoms," the railroad yards, and an uninhabited mile to reach "Burlington Beach," the name first assigned to Capitol Beach. An excursion boat, the "Queen of the

³"Thirty Years Ago Today," *Nebraska State Journal* (Lincoln), May 27, 1938; *Lincoln Daily News*, July 3, 1908.

⁴*Lincoln Daily Star*, August 1, 17, 1908.

⁵*Ibid.*, October 23, 1908.

⁶Albert Watkins in *Lincoln Daily News*, February 16, 1909, April 19, 1910.

⁷E. Bryant Phillips, "A History of Street Railways in Nebraska," Ms. Thesis, University of Nebraska, 1944, Chapter VI.

Blue," was brought from Beatrice and launched on the lake. Electric cars were reported to have been in service on the Burlington Beach line.⁸ But the car company appears to have been born on the wrong side of the railroad yards, and for lack of viaduct, seems never to have had easy access to the city.⁹ In any event, it went without mention in the local press for a decade and its place was taken by the Lincoln, Capitol Beach, and Milford Railway.

The primary excuse for the revival of the Capitol Beach car line in 1906 was the fact that a viaduct was being constructed over the tracks west on "O" street. The Lincoln, Capitol Beach, and Milford Railway was incorporated under a steam railroad charter and was authorized to build a track across the viaduct. The company issued \$19,000 of common stock and floated a small unfunded debt in constructing its short single track line (many passing tracks enroute; one on the viaduct).¹⁰ Electric motive power seems to have been contemplated from the beginning though the right to use steam locomotives even on the viaduct was authorized.¹¹ The name of Milford seems to have been taken in vain, for that village twenty miles west of Lincoln, seems never to have entered seriously into the company's plans.¹² As for the car line to Capitol Beach, it was leased to the Lincoln Traction Company even before rails were laid across the viaduct.¹³ The Traction Company operated many an "extra" car on its Capitol Beach line and defied the Railway Commission's free transfer and reduced fare orders on the grounds that this line was operated under a steam railroad charter.¹⁴

⁸*Nebraska State Journal*, July 17, 1892, June 30, 1942 "Fifty Years Ago Today." *Plattsmouth Journal*, July 16, 1892; *Lincoln Daily News*, September 5, 1892.

⁹*Lincoln Daily News*, January 11, May 12, 30, 1893; March 13, December 14, 1894; *Lincoln Daily Call*, July 3, 1893, December 16, 1895; *Nebraska State Journal*, June 23, December 14, 1895.

¹⁰U. S. Census, *Street and Electric Railways*, 1907, p. 352; *Moody's Manual of Railroads*, 1927, p. 1349.

¹¹*Lincoln Daily Star*, June 28, July 30, 1906.

¹²No mention of it was made in the various Lincoln papers read throughout a number of years.

¹³*Lincoln Daily Star*, May 10, 1907.

¹⁴*Lincoln Daily News*, July 20, 1907; *Lincoln Daily Star*, July 29, 1907; *Nebraska Railway Commission's Annual Report*, 1908, pp. 81-84.

In 1910 Lincoln experienced one of its periodic orgies of talk about a union depot. The project this time was to have involved a station fronting on "O" street with street traffic feeding into the upper level of the building directly off the viaduct (as in Omaha).¹⁵ This would have multiplied the patronage on the Capitol Beach line many fold, of course. But as if to discourage such developments, the street car company had to be threatened in 1910 ere it paved between its tracks on the viaduct.¹⁶ Though the Lincoln, Capitol Beach and Milford Railroad was still a separate corporation, it came under the Control of W. E. Sharp (Lincoln Traction Company president) for a time.¹⁷ The Traction Company seems to have had little desire for actual acquisition of the Capitol Beach line; for monetary reasons, no doubt. In 1914, for example, a gross income of less than \$9,000 was claimed for the Capitol Beach line in an attempt to avoid occupation tax payments.¹⁸ Finally, in 1927, the Traction Company was permitted to substitute buses for street cars on the Capitol Beach line, but only after it had promised to pay the city \$3,200 for replacing pavement on the viaduct.¹⁹ With the departure of the last street car from its line, the Lincoln, Capitol Beach and Milford Railroad was liquidated as a corporation.²⁰ Then, at long last, a street car did finally reach the town of Milford. It was hauled ignobly out from Lincoln on motor trucks and unloaded at a girls' camp to be used as a supply room.

Belmont and Northern Railway Company

The village of Belmont, three miles north of Lincoln, was anxious for street railway facilities and real estate

¹⁵*Lincoln Daily News*, March 24, 1910.

¹⁶*Nebraska State Journal*, August 2, 1910.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, February 2, 1942.

¹⁸*Lincoln Daily News*, July 2, 1914.

¹⁹*Lincoln State Journal*, June 6, July 28, August 5, 1927; *Lincoln Daily Star*, June 6, July 28, August 5, 1927.

²⁰Moody, *op. cit.*, 1928, p. 2234.

development. It lay in the path of any interurban which might leave the city for Wahoo and the north. These factors combined to encourage interurban promotions in and around Belmont.

In earlier years, Belmont had been connected with Lincoln by horse railway and by Lincoln's first electric cars (Lincoln City Electric Railway).²¹ Belmont was alive with subdivisions during the early nineties and an Episcopal academy was abuilding. But the car line failed, the vacant lots grew up in weeds, and the academy burned in 1898.²² The failure of the Lincoln City Electric Railway caused the Belmont car line (known as the "Grandview" or "Worthington" line) to pass into the hands of the Home Street Railway and then to the Lincoln Traction Company. The line was leased and a mule car was operated thereon after 1897.²³ In 1899 the Traction Company pledged the Belmont line as equity to cover its unpaid paving tax. There were no bidders that year and the rusty line with several old cars became the property of the city of Lincoln.²⁴ The city contracted with I. L. Lyman who ran a horse car on the line every ninety minutes, and carried pupils to Belmont school for the city school district for a consideration of thirty dollars a month.²⁵

The year 1902 was one of hope and then of despair for Belmont's aspirations. Interurban interests began bidding for the city of Lincoln street car line. W. C. Kenyon offered \$7,000 cash plus one percent of the gross income for ten years and two percent thereafter, for the property.²⁶ E. C. Hurd raised the offer by a thousand dollars and J. E. Riley raised it by three and a half thousand.²⁷ Kenyon was associated with packing house interests in Lincoln

²¹Phillips, *op. cit.*, Chapters II, II, and VI.

²²"Lincoln Datelines," *Lincoln Evening Journal*, October 18, 1943.

²³*Nebraska State Journal*, June 17, 1897.

²⁴*Lincoln Daily News*, August 7, 1899; *Nebraska State Journal*, April 4, August 20, 1900, March 23, 1901.

²⁵*Nebraska State Journal*, May 23, 1899, August 21, 1901, "Forty Years Ago," October 1, 1940.

²⁶*Lincoln Daily News*, October 22, 28, 31, 1902; *Nebraska State Journal*, October 22, 29, 1902.

²⁷*Lincoln Daily News*, November 3, 1902.

and Omaha; Hurd was promoting an interurban between the two cities; Riley had interurban connections elsewhere.²⁸ The city council voted to accept the Kenyon offer. But the Mayor vetoed the measure and despite a petition from Belmont citizens, no further action was taken.²⁹ Mr. Kenyon and Mr. Hurd turned their interest in the direction of a University Place and Bethany route for their interurban and turned up a year later as chief promoters of the Omaha, Lincoln and Beatrice Railway.³⁰ In 1903 several Belmont citizens (I. L. Lyman, R. J. Gaddis, C. M. Bailey, and Laura H. Weld) incorporated the Belmont line into a \$10,000 Lincoln Heights Street Railway. But I. L. Lyman continued to operate his horse car on the Belmont line until 1906.³¹

Seven years after Mr. Lyman abandoned his horse car line, the Belmont and Northern Traction Company was chartered by some men in the northern suburb. The plan as first revealed was to involve a street car line, then it was later changed to an interurban with the word "Railway" substituted for "Traction Company" in its title.³² The city council in Lincoln was preparing to refer the company's right-of-way requests to the people, then a postponement seems to have terminated the promotional efforts of the Belmont and Northern Railway.³³ As late as 1916 a Belmont group (North Side Improvement Club) tried to get street car service from the Traction Company in Lincoln,³⁴ but the interurban promoters were not mentioned in the Lincoln press thereafter.

²⁸*Lincoln Daily Star*, November 17, 1902; *Lincoln Daily News*, November 3, 12, 1902.

²⁹*Nebraska State Journal*, November 11, 1902; *Lincoln Daily News*, November 11, 18, 1902; *Lincoln Daily Star*, November 11, 17, 1902.

³⁰*Lincoln Daily Star*, November 26, 1902, May 25, 1903; *Nebraska State Journal*, March 21, 1903; *Omaha World Herald*, August 9, 1903; *Lincoln Daily News*, September 29, 1903.

³¹E. Bryant Phillips, "Horse Car Days and Ways in Nebraska," *Nebraska History*, XXIX (March 1948), 31.

³²*Lincoln Daily Star*, March 27, 1913.

³³*Ibid.*, April 1, 1913.

³⁴*Lincoln Daily News*, May 18, 1916.

Omaha, Lincoln, and Beatrice Railway

There was considerable rumor of interurban promotion in Lincoln in the year 1902. A group of promoters from Michigan were considering a Lincoln-Omaha line that year.³⁵ Various other interurban promotions centering in Omaha included a projected line to Lincoln. Of these, the most pretentious was a \$15,000,000 daydream launched by the Omaha and Council Bluffs Street Railway.³⁶ Another promotion by E. C. Hurd started modestly but gained momentum. It may be remembered that E. C. Hurd, along with J. E. Riley, and W. C. Kenyon had bid for the franchise and rights of the defunct Home Street Railway in 1902.³⁷ And although none of these men was awarded the desired franchise, Mr. Hurd was active in Bethany, Havelock, and University Place, negotiating for right-of-way through Lincoln's northeast suburbs.³⁸ Perhaps for bargaining purposes Mr. Hurd allowed a rumor to circulate that his line might leave Lincoln near Belmont and reach Omaha via Wahoo.³⁹ The Lincoln Traction Company seems to have turned down all of Mr. Hurd's offers relative to use of its tracks by interurban cars within the city of Lincoln.⁴⁰ Then the "Interurban" company secured the necessary rights in the northeast suburbs and in the city itself, and its route was assured (Fourteenth Street, X Street, Missouri Pacific right-of-way, Y Street, and Starr Street).⁴¹

Late in 1903, W. C. Kenyon, who had opposed E. C. Hurd at first, became chief promoter of the Omaha, Lin-

³⁵*Ibid.*, September 29, 1902; *Lincoln Daily Star*, November 13, 1902.

³⁶*Lincoln Daily Star*, December 20, 22, 1902.

³⁷*Lincoln Daily News*, November 21, 1902; *Lincoln Daily Star*, January 27, 1903.

³⁸*Lincoln Daily Star*, November 26, 1902, May 25, 1903; *Nebraska State Journal*, March 21, 1903; *Lincoln Daily News*, September 29, 1903.

³⁹*Nebraska State Journal*, September 24, November 1, 1903, April 5, 1905; *Lincoln Daily News*, September 21, 1904.

⁴⁰*Nebraska State Journal*, December 24, 1903.

⁴¹*Lincoln Daily Star*, October 5, 1903, March 22, 1904; A. J. Sawyer, *Lincoln and Lancaster County* (Chicago: S. J. Clarke Company, 1921), I, 147.

coln, and Beatrice Railway.⁴² Contracts were let to Westinghouse which had represented a different group of capitalists a year earlier.⁴³ There was talk of offering the presidency of the company to former Governor James E. Boyd.⁴⁴ Meantime, E. C. Hurd was carrying out a \$15,000 survey of the sixty mile route between Lincoln and Omaha.⁴⁵ Negotiation for right-of-way into Lincoln having been completed, the company turned its attention to the acquisition of similar rights into Omaha and Ashland. "Uncle Joe" Cannon (who was to become the next speaker of the House of Representatives) granted rights through one of his farms near Ashland,⁴⁶ but steam railroad opposition to interurban lines blocked the company's efforts elsewhere.⁴⁷ Permission to use roads in Sarpy and Douglas counties was obtained,⁴⁸ and an agreement was reported whereby the Interurban cars would enter Omaha via the Hanscom Park line of the Omaha and Council Bluffs Street Railway.⁴⁹

Mr. E. C. Hurd seems to have been the O. L. & B. handyman. At least he was near-at-hand in whatever activity involved expenditures at the moment. He was promoter one year, surveyor another, then engineer during the early construction period, and finally he became local manager of the Lincoln division. Henry Robinson became president in 1904 and Harvey Musser was the company's attorney.⁵⁰ Harvey Malone, who had completed five miles of grading east of Bethany (grade never used but still in evidence), was set to work grading west of Bethany toward Lincoln.⁵¹ Amidst talk of a three million dollar line to Omaha, of a 1200 foot Platte river bridge, of forty mile

⁴²*Omaha World Herald*, August 9, 1903.

⁴³*Ibid.*, September 26, 1903.

⁴⁴*Omaha Daily Bee*, November 19, 1903.

⁴⁵*Nebraska State Journal*, April 12, 1903; *Omaha World Herald*, October 1, 1903.

⁴⁶*Lincoln Daily News*, September 29, 1903.

⁴⁷*Nebraska State Journal*, July 15, 1905.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, April 17, 1903; *Omaha World Herald*, October 15, 1903; *Lincoln Daily News*, December 9, 1904.

⁴⁹*Lincoln Daily News*, September 22, 1904; *Nebraska State Journal*, January 7, 1905.

⁵⁰*Lincoln Daily News*, September 21, 22, 1904.

⁵¹*Ibid.*, September 21, 1904.

per hour speeds, of diverting Salt Creek at Ashland, and laying out a new town, "Sarpy City," the O. L. & B. actually built a five mile suburban line from Lincoln to Bethany.⁵²

The Interurban had the usual difficulties in building its line from Bethany to Lincoln. A connection was made with the Missouri Pacific at Thirtieth and X streets so that materials might be delivered to points of construction on the O. L. & B.⁵³ The Missouri Pacific, perhaps in repayment for the traffic routed over its lines to the Interurban, balked an attempt of the Traction Company to build a line north on Seventeenth Street into Interurban territory.⁵⁴ The Traction Company, in turn, tried to prevent the Interurban from crossing its tracks on North Twenty-seventh Street, but finally gave in on this point.⁵⁵ The Rock Island railroad started to fight the Interurban over crossing rights, but this controversy also was settled amicably.⁵⁶ Certain property owners on North Fourteenth Street contested the building of a "Commerical Railway" (the O. L. & B. was chartered as a steam railroad) along that street, but the injunction proved only temporary and construction went on apace.⁵⁷

Nearly a year had been consumed in building the Interurban's first line.⁵⁸ An arrangement was made for purchase of electric current from the Traction Company,⁵⁹ two large (black) double-truck cars were ordered from St. Louis,⁶⁰ (cars powered by gasoline or by steam had been

⁵²*Lincoln Daily News*, October 25, December 17, 1904; January 22, May 23, June 21, 1905; *Nebraska State Journal*, December 13, 21, 1904, March 10, 12, September 14, 1905; *Lincoln Daily Star*, July 29, 1904.

⁵³*Nebraska State Journal*, September 2, 1905.

⁵⁴*Lincoln Daily News*, November 6, 7, 1905; *Lincoln Daily Star*, November 7, 1905; *Nebraska State Journal*, November 11, 1905.

⁵⁵*Nebraska State Journal*, October 8, 1905; *Lincoln Daily Star*, October 11, November 12, 1905.

⁵⁶*Nebraska State Journal*, July 25, 1905.

⁵⁷*Lincoln Daily Star*, November 24, December 3, 1905, February 14, 1906; *Nebraska State Journal*, December 12, 1905; *Lincoln Daily News*, March 17, 1906.

⁵⁸*Nebraska State Journal*, October 21, November 19, 22, 1905; *Lincoln Daily Star*, June 20, 1905.

⁵⁹*Lincoln Daily News*, June 8, 1906.

⁶⁰*Nebraska State Journal*, July 28, 1905; *Lincoln Daily Star*, June 20, 1906.

considered),⁶¹ and regular service was inaugurated.⁶² In their first year of operation the big black cars traversed 130,745 miles of 70 lb. rail (considered very heavy for street railways at that time) to carry 378,413 fare passengers.⁶³ And before that year had ended, the company was seeking franchise rights for a branch line through University Place into Havelock.⁶⁴ Two years later the company sought extensive rights upon the streets of Lincoln.⁶⁵ The chief purpose of the O. L. & B. officials in securing these rights was their ever present desire to build an interurban network radiating out of Lincoln.

In Omaha, the activities of the O. L. & B. were definitely secondary compared with its progress in Lincoln. Omaha papers carried items of the construction of the line through Lincoln.⁶⁶ There were predictions concerning the route in and through South Omaha,⁶⁷ and accounts of the company having attained franchise rights in Sarpy⁶⁸ and Douglas counties.⁶⁹ An Interurban Land Company was incorporated for half a million dollars to develop the town of Sarpy Mills and a real estate boom just west of South Omaha seemed obvious.⁷⁰ The company exchanged stock for right-of-way on more than one occasion, but it threatened to avoid the vicinity of Ashland rather than relocate the Salt Creek channel as demanded by local authorities.⁷¹ The O. L. & B. received a South Omaha franchise and some grading was done west of town; but during 1905 there was increasing uneasiness over the interurban's in-

⁶¹*Lincoln Daily News*, October 19, 1904; *Nebraska State Journal*, May 28, December 26, 1905; *Lincoln Daily Star*, October 5, 1905.

⁶²*Lincoln Daily Star*, July 30, August 6, 25, 1906.

⁶³U. S. Census, *Street and Electric Railways*, 1907, p. 504.

⁶⁴*Lincoln Daily Star*, September 21, 1907.

⁶⁵*Ibid.*, March 22, November 15, 1909; "Thirty Years Ago Today," *Nebraska State Journal*, November 15, 1939.

⁶⁶*Omaha Daily Bee*, September 3, November 18, 1904; *Omaha World Herald*, September 22, 1904.

⁶⁷*Omaha Daily News*, November 18, 1904.

⁶⁸*Omaha Daily Bee*, September 24, December 10, 1904; *Omaha World Herald*, December 13, 1904.

⁶⁹*Omaha World Herald*, December 31, 1904; *Omaha Bee*, December 31, 1904; February 24, 1905.

⁷⁰*Omaha Daily News*, October 30, 1904; *Omaha World Herald*, December 11, 1904, February 24, 1905.

⁷¹*Omaha World Herald*, February 6, April 21, May 3, 1905.

activity near Omaha.⁷² By 1906 the company seems to have failed completely in negotiating for its Omaha terminal facilities.⁷³ In 1907 the company's financial status was laid low by the death of Henry Robinson of Cleveland and by the panic of that year.⁷⁴ In any event, the O. L. & B. built no trackage in Omaha and it seemed to have never had serious intentions of building in Beatrice.

While the O. L. & B. lay dormant, a Denver syndicate incorporated the Omaha, Lincoln, Interurban Railway Construction Company which was supposedly backed by English capital sufficient to complete an interurban from Omaha to Beatrice, via Lincoln and Crete.⁷⁵ Of this project no more was heard. A year later, the Omaha, Western and Lincoln Interurban Railway was vaguely mentioned, but nothing came of that one either.⁷⁶ The citizens of Ralston and Papillion to the south and west of Omaha were not to be denied, however. Their dream came true in the form of the Nebraska Traction and Power Company which actually built out West Q street to Ralston in 1910. But this company was in receivership by 1913, and just then the O. L. & B. with new capital and renewed intentions reentered the Omaha arena.

The insolvent Nebraska Traction and Power Company (Omaha to Ralston) came under the domination of the McKinley interurban syndicate in 1913. Former Congressman William B. McKinley of Illinois controlled some 800 miles of interurban and street railway lines in and around Illinois.⁷⁷ The McKinley interests reorganized their newly acquired Nebraska property and renamed it the Omaha and Lincoln Railway and Light Company.⁷⁸ There

⁷²*Ibid.*, July 29, August 4, 1905, August 23, 1907.

⁷³*Lincoln Daily News*, April 10, May 26, 1906; *Omaha World Herald*, August 5, 1938.

⁷⁴*Lincoln Daily News*, November 15, 1909.

⁷⁵*Omaha Daily Bee*, March 5, 7, 1909; *Omaha World Herald*, March 5, 7, 1909.

⁷⁶*Lincoln Daily Star*, July 12, 1910.

⁷⁷*Omaha Daily Bee*, June 20, 1913; *Omaha World Herald*, June 20, 1913.

⁷⁸*Lincoln Daily Star*, January 23, June 21, July 14, 1913; *Lincoln Daily News*, March 8, July 14, 1913; *Omaha Bee*, July 15, August 20, 1913; *Omaha Daily News*, July 15, 1913.

were rumors that the McKinley syndicate would extend its line to Lincoln and perhaps toward St. Joseph.⁷⁹ But the McKinley interests were thwarted by the so-called Moore group in Detroit which offered the services of its Northern Construction Company as an instrument for financing and completing Lincoln's interurban, the O. L. & B. railway, between the two cities.⁸⁰ The O. L. & B. sought permission to issue securities (\$2,250,000 in bonds; \$850,000 in stocks) which were to be paid over to the Northern Construction Company as the line was completed to Omaha.⁸¹ The Nebraska Railway Commission gave its consent to this financing proposal providing that sums unused in construction costs should be retained by the O. L. & B. subject to control of the commission.⁸² Another enterprise of the Moore group was the Commonwealth Power Company of Nebraska which claimed power rights on the Loup River which it offered for the use of an interurban network between Lincoln and Omaha and perhaps as far south as Pawnee City.⁸³ And since W. E. Sharp (president of the Lincoln Traction Company), was also president of the Commonwealth Power Company of Nebraska, the Moore group represented a community of interests seemingly capable of pushing the O. L. & B. on to completion.⁸⁴

A period of rivalry seemed imminent when the McKinley interests also proposed a three million dollar issue and talked big about extending their Ralston line on to

⁷⁹*Omaha World Herald*, June 21, July 3, 1913; *Omaha Daily Bee*, July 15, 1913.

⁸⁰*Lincoln Daily Star*, January 3, 1913; *Lincoln Daily News*, January 3, 15, 1913; *Omaha Daily News*, January 3, 15, 1913; *Omaha Daily News*, July 15, 1913.

⁸¹*Lincoln Daily News*, January 15, 1913; *Omaha Daily Bee*, February 26, 1913; *Omaha World Herald*, February 26, 1913; "Thirty Years Ago Today," *Nebraska State Journal*, February 27, 1943.

⁸²*Lincoln Daily Star*, January 3, 23, 1913; *Lincoln Daily News*, January 15, February 15, 26, 1913; *Omaha Daily Bee*, May 9, June 25, 1913; *Omaha World Herald*, May 31, June 25, 1913.

⁸³*Lincoln Daily News*, February 15, June 5, 1913; *Lincoln Daily Star*, June 5, 1913; *Omaha World Herald*, July 6, 1913.

⁸⁴*Omaha Daily Bee*, December 8, 1912; *Omaha World Herald*, July 6, 1913; *Lincoln Daily Star*, January 3, 1913.

Lincoln.⁸⁵ There were rumors that either company would buy out the other and then complete the line. A working arrangement between the Moore and McKinley interests was mentioned frequently.⁸⁶ In reality, neither company had sufficient financial backing to complete the three million dollar line. The Moore interests controlled a Northern Construction Company which presumably would have built the line at a handsome profit in exchange for O. L. & B. securities.⁸⁷ But the Commonwealth Power Company lost a Supreme Court case relative to its power rights on the Loup River.⁸⁸ Early in 1914 the Lincoln interurban was reported to have dropped its contract with the construction company and was supposedly negotiating with another firm.⁸⁹ Then the McKinley syndicate seems to have negotiated with the Moore-controlled Northern Construction Company, but nothing seems to have come of the attempt.⁹⁰ To make a long story short, neither company built the interurban line. A business depression and the World War in 1914 were later advanced as sufficient excuse.⁹¹ In 1916 the O. L. & B. proposed a five million dollar security issue to complete the line. Increased labor and material costs were advanced as cause for the increase in capitalization.⁹² A bill was prepared for introduction in the state legislature permitting a stock issue of \$50,000

⁸⁵*Omaha Daily Bee*, June 21, July 15, 1913; *Omaha World Herald*, June 21, July 3, 1913.

⁸⁶*Omaha World Herald*, July 3, 1913, March 30, 1914; *Omaha Daily News*, July 15, 1913; *Lincoln Daily News*, March 23, 1914; *Omaha World Herald*, March 30, 1914; *Lincoln Daily Star*, December 11, 25, 1915.

⁸⁷*Lincoln Daily News*, January 15, February 26, June 5, 1913; *Lincoln Daily Star*, June 5, 1913.

⁸⁸*Nebr. Power Co. v. Koenig*, 93 *Nebraska Reports* 68; 139 *Northwestern Reporter* 839; *Lincoln Daily Star*, November 12, 1913; *Lincoln Daily News*, November 12, 1913.

⁸⁹*Omaha World Herald*, March 11, 1914.

⁹⁰*Ibid.*, March 30, 1914.

⁹¹*Ibid.*, August 26, 1916.

⁹²*Lincoln Daily Star*, February 27, 1916; *Lincoln Daily News*, September 27, 1916; *Omaha World Herald*, August 26, 1916; *Omaha Daily Bee*, August 26, 1916.

a mile for Nebraska interurban railways.⁹³ But the war, the increasing use of automobiles, and perhaps some sound judgment squelched further attempts to connect Lincoln and Omaha by interurban.

Even though Lincoln's interurban railway had muffed two attempts to build on to Omaha, it did become a suburban line of some pretensions. It had aligned itself with the Citizens Railway against the Traction Company during the rivalry of 1907-1909. This alliance gave the interurban a downtown loop (Fourteenth Street, N Street, Eleventh Street, P Street) which had to be relinquished when the Citizens Railway merged with the Traction Company.⁹⁴ At the very time (1912) that the interurban proposed a three million dollar line to Omaha it reported a deficit of \$292 on its line to Bethany.⁹⁵ It had stayed out of the "universal transfer" agreement between the Traction Company and the Citizens Railway in 1907 advancing as its excuse the legal fiction that it was a "steam railway" and therefore not subject to that particular order of the Nebraska Railway Commission.⁹⁶ The citizens of Bethany, irked by the no-transfer agreement, later demanded a straight five cent fare instead of the eight for fifty cents rate which they had been paying.⁹⁷ The O. L. & B. resisted the lower fares,⁹⁸ whereupon a \$25,000 company was organized by Bethany citizens and a competing line was built south from the Cotner campus, then west along Holdrege Street to the Traction Company's State Farm line.⁹⁹ With two lines to Bethany (the second operated by the Traction Company), the fare was set at five cents on

⁹³Nebraska Legislature, 35th Session (1917) *Senate File 25; Omaha Daily Bee*, January 18, 1917. Another bill, *Senate File 180*, would have allowed a 30 per cent allowance for "discounts and commissions," wherever interurban bonds were issued. Nebraska Legislature, 34th Session (1915) *Senate File 180; Lincoln Daily Star*, April 1, 1915.

⁹⁴*Lincoln Daily News*, June 12, 1914.

⁹⁵*Ibid.*, November 30, 1912.

⁹⁶Nebraska State Railway Commission, *Annual Report*, 1908.

⁹⁷*Lincoln Daily Star*, March 22, 1912.

⁹⁸*Lincoln Daily News*, November 30, 1912.

⁹⁹*Lincoln Daily Star*, May 21, July 14, 1912; "Thirty Years Ago Today," *Nebraska State Journal*, May 20, 25, July 18, 1942.

each line.¹⁰⁰ The Interurban retaliated by featuring its State Fair service that year (five minutes walk to the 17th Street entrance),¹⁰¹ and by building a branch line a mile north on Warren Avenue (now Forty-eighth Street) into University Place.¹⁰²

This invasion of the Traction's Company's territory met a fiery response at the crossing which the Interurban had to construct on Eighteenth Street (now St. Paul). This crossing was once removed and "packed into Lincoln" by Traction track crews, then later when restored and subject to upkeep at O. L. & B. expense, was abused by Traction motormen who purposely operated their cars over it at high speeds.¹⁰³ The Interurban operated its "dinky" single truck "Toonerville" car every half hour on the Warren Avenue branch line transferring passengers and large wooden tubs containing ice cream to and from its main line cars in the south portion of the Methodist suburb.¹⁰⁴ The motorman-conductor of this shuttle car, sat fifteen minutes at the "junction" waiting for the other main line car to return from the city. Aside from the mirthful voices of swimmers at nearby "Hank's Pond" of a summer evening, that Toonerville "skipper's" vigil at the "junction" was a lonely one indeed.¹⁰⁵

For a few years, a marriage of convenience existed between the Lincoln Traction Company and the O. L. & B. The Interurban was running small deficits, and the Traction Company's Bethany line had never made money.¹⁰⁶ Holdrege Street was about to be paved and one night five blocks of car track (Forty-second to Forty-ninth) was found mysteriously torn up and thrown into

¹⁰⁰*Lincoln Daily News*, August 29, 1912.

¹⁰¹*Ibid.*, September 3, 1912.

¹⁰²*Lincoln Daily Star*, August 15, 1912.

¹⁰³*Ibid.*, December 3, 1912; *Lincoln Daily News*, December 6, 1912; "Thirty Years Ago," *Nebraska State Journal*, December 2, 1942.

¹⁰⁴*Nebraska State Journal*, December 1, 1920.

¹⁰⁶*Lincoln Daily Star*, May 13, 1915; *Lincoln Daily News*, No-motorman, Al Beach, in 1915.

¹⁰⁶*Lincoln Daily Star*, May 13, 1915; *Lincoln Daily News*, November 26, 1914.

a ditch.¹⁰⁷ Thereafter, the Traction Company routed its Bethany cars over O. L. & B. tracks from Twenty-seventh and Y streets to Forty-ninth and Holdrege streets.¹⁰⁸ A month later each company raised its fare back to a straight five cents.¹⁰⁹ The two companies obtained war-time fare increases in concert,¹¹⁰ but Manager Bramlette who had engineered the amicable relations resigned his position with the Traction Company (in need of a rest), and the honeymoon was at an end.¹¹¹ The O. L. & B. served notice on the Traction Company to cease using Interurban tracks (two cars, one from each company, crashed in a fog at Twenty-ninth and Y streets injuring three employees).¹¹² Then Manager Bramlette (now with the O. L. & B. exclusively), proposed an extension on Idylwild Drive to the State Farm campus. This project, along with the elimination of State Farm cars and Bethany cars on part of the Interurban's lines would have given the latter company a monopoly of the local traffic between the university campuses, to Bethany, and in parts of University Place and Lincoln.¹¹³ The city council was more concerned that car service should be continued to all parts of the city than in determining which company should provide the service.¹¹⁴ The Interurban officials took city councilmen for a ride in the company's newest car (called a "pullman coach") and passed out cigars enroute.¹¹⁵ But when the Interurban requested use of a loop (Fourteenth, N, Eleventh, and R streets) this touched upon Traction Company rights in a vital spot and a real

¹⁰⁷*Lincoln Daily Star*, September 2, 1915.

¹⁰⁸*Ibid.*, September 4, December 26, 1915.

¹⁰⁹*Ibid.*, January 23, 1916.

¹¹⁰*Ibid.*, May 21, 1918; *Nebraska State Journal*, September 13, 1918; *Lincoln Daily Star*, August 9, 1919.

¹¹¹*Lincoln Daily Star*, October 19, 1919.

¹¹²*Ibid.*, January 17, February 7, 1920.

¹¹³*Lincoln Daily Star*, February 14, 1920; *Nebraska State Journal*, February 28, 1920.

¹¹⁴*Lincoln Daily Star*, March 1, 26, April 1, 6, 1920. The city obtained a restraining order and delayed abandonment of Traction services on the Interurban line. (*Nebraska State Journal*, November 8, 1920; *Lincoln Daily Star*, November 8, 1920.)

¹¹⁵*Nebraska State Journal*, November 24, 1920.

fight between the two tram companies ensued.¹¹⁶ The Traction Company enjoined O. L. & B. extension of the spur line on Idylwild Drive (four blocks).¹¹⁷ But the O. L. & B. finished construction of a new fire-proof car barn at Thirtieth and Y streets and prepared to operate additional cars to the State Farm (perhaps to Havelock and Omaha, as well).¹¹⁸ Manager Bramlette of the O. L. & B. (formerly of the Traction Company) dragged the Citizens Railway merger deal into the case and definitely hinted at Traction Company over-capitalization in his effort to counteract Traction Company opposition. But to no avail.¹¹⁹ Judge Shepherd in district court ruled that since the O. L. & B. was chartered as a "steam railroad," its rights upon the streets should not equal those extended to an ordinary street railway, hence the Traction Company need not give way.¹²⁰ This decision relegated the O. L. & B. to continued impotence and eventual insolvency.

The O. L. & B. still had some fight left in 1920. It appealed the court decision denying it the right to build the Idylwild extension and ordered the Traction Company to cease using Interurban tracks. Traction cars bound for the State Farm were routed along O Street (thus missing the University campus entirely), and then one day the power supplied by the Traction Company to the Interurban was turned off.¹²¹ The Traction Company served its Bethany line by a bus operating from the end of the State Farm line during the emergency,¹²² and alleged an unpaid power bill and need for the entire output of its dynamos as an excuse for turning off the power.¹²³ The O. L. & B. made temporary arrangements for power, then began ne-

¹¹⁶*Lincoln Daily Star*, May 21, June 1, 1920.

¹¹⁷*Ibid.*, June 15, 1920.

¹¹⁸*Nebraska State Journal*, March 31, 1920; *Lincoln Daily Star*, April 23, June 17, 1920.

¹¹⁹*Lincoln Daily Star*, June 3, 23, 26, July 9, 1920.

¹²⁰*Nebraska State Journal*, November 27, 1920; *Lincoln Daily Star*, November 27, 1920. Note that this same point of law had alternately benefitted and plagued the Interurban on other occasions.

¹²¹*Nebraska State Journal*, November 29, 1920, November 28, 1940, "Thirty Years Ago Today."

¹²²*Nebraska State Journal*, November 29, 1920; *Lincoln Daily Star*, November 29, 1920.

¹²³*Nebraska State Journal*, November 29, 30, 1920.

gotiations for purchase of current from the city's plant.¹²⁴ A truce was arranged; the Interurban obtained its power and kept Traction cars off its rails; but lost its appeal before the Supreme Court of Nebraska relative to the Idylwild Drive extension.¹²⁵

The Interurban's position was untenable. Its efforts to reach pay territory had been thwarted at every turn. Its revenues were always inadequate and by 1926 were declining as were those of nearly every street railway in the land. Bus service was substituted on the University Place line (thirty minute service through to Lincoln, fare ten cents or three tokens for twenty-five cents), late in 1926.¹²⁶ By this arrangement, the O. L. & B. at last served the Agricultural College via Idylwild Drive,¹²⁷ but the Traction Company retaliated by operating buses of its own and not only between the two campuses but also to University Place.¹²⁸ The Interurban continued its street car service to Bethany for a year,¹²⁹ then pleading deficits (\$3,000 in 1926), asked for a fare increase (to four tokens for thirty cents and two cent zone fare beyond Forty-fifth Street). It abandoned buses, and operated street cars again on both its Bethany and University Place lines.¹³⁰ The Traction Company withdrew its University Place buses at the same time, and having abandoned its Bethany street car line it allowed the O. L. & B. about \$2,100 additional revenue. But the financial result was still negative (\$16,000 accumulated deficit since 1922) and when an \$18,000 paving expense (Y Street, Seventh Street to Twenty-first Street) challenged the company's continued existence, it gave up the fight.¹³¹ The city council opposed abandon-

¹²⁴*Lincoln Daily Star*, December 30, 1920; *Nebraska State Journal*, January 14, 1922.

¹²⁵*Nebraska State Journal*, March 28, 1922; *Lincoln Daily Star*, March 28, 1922; *Lincoln Traction Company v. Omaha, Lincoln & Beatrice Railway Company*, 118, *Nebr.*, 154, 187 N. W. 790.

¹²⁶*Lincoln Daily Star*, August 7, 13, 1926.

¹²⁷*Nebraska State Journal*, September 11, 1926.

¹²⁸*Ibid.*, October 19, 1926; *Lincoln Daily Star*, October 19, 1926.

¹²⁹*Nebraska State Journal*, October 1, 1926.

¹³⁰*Ibid.*, April 27, May 17, 1927; *Lincoln Daily Star*, May 17, 1927.

¹³¹*Nebraska State Journal*, April 27, 1927; March 17, 1928; *Lincoln Daily Star*, May 17, 1928.

ment and the State Railway Commission offered its cooperation (yet it would not require continued operation at a loss), but the Traction Company promised to serve O. L. & B. patrons adequately with buses, and the Interurban quit.¹³² The last car on the line carried several passengers who had ridden upon the company's first car twenty-two years earlier. The next morning rails on Y Street were taken out.¹³³

The defunct system was sold to the Abel Construction Company which immediately relaid the rails and paved the four blocks on Y Street. The line was used for local freight between Bethany and Fourteenth and X streets in Lincoln.¹³⁴ Trackage on Fourteenth Street was removed. Passenger cars gathered dust and rust in the new concrete barn at Thirtieth and Y streets, until 1941 when the war emergency caused their sale and removal. What a tragedy that the Interurban had not kept those cars and its trackage on Fourteenth Street and on Warren Avenue (North Forty-eight Street). Surely its passenger service during World War II, what with tire shortages and abandonment of Traction Company lines in Northeast Lincoln, might have given the O. L. & B. a volume of patronage so frequently sought but never achieved.

The O. L. & B. had been the unfortunate victim of circumstances. As a suburban line, it had given its patrons a comfortable ride and a better than average road bed. Its equipment had been the newest; old type cars having been retired long before they were worn out. Its public relations policy was excellent. Yet the gross revenues were inade-

¹³²*Nebraska State Journal*, April 26, May 11, December 22, 1928; Nebraska Railway Commission, *Annual Report*, 1928, pp. 338-342.

¹³³"Ten Years Ago Today," *Nebraska State Journal*, May 12, 1938.

¹³⁴Moody, *op. cit.* did not list the O. L. & B. after 1935. But the Nebraska Railway Commission listed the claimed assets of the company at \$286,439.58 as of December 31, 1937. Nebraska Railway Commission, *Annual Report*, 1939, pp. 164-167.

The Elastic Stop Nut Corporation located at 16th and X streets on O.L.&B. trackage and brought considerable freight business to the company after 1942. (*Nebraska State Journal*, June 12, June 17, 1942.)

quate from the beginning. As an interurban, the O. L. & B. had not survived the promotional stage. But one might reflect upon that fact with few misgivings; considering the poor showing made by interurbans generally, and the death sentence pronounced upon most electric railways with the coming of motor buses and private automobiles.