



Courtesy of Lane County Historical Museum

quired to leave their pets while riding. It wasn't uncommon for mischievous kids to hide in the box and catch a free ride.

One of the drivers for the mule streetcars was Wiley Griffon, a man who had come to Oregon from Texas with Holden. When cars derailed he would unhitch the mule, tie it to the side of the car and then together with the animal push the car back on the rails.

A streetcar rider from the mule days, the late Pauline Walton, remembered Griffon fondly.

"I remember that Wiley used to hitch his mule to a pole near Villard Hall on the campus when he didn't have any passengers on board. Then he would go into the hall to see what was going on. Often, when he came back out, the car would be filled with passengers," Walton said.

Mules on the line were changed every four hours. And they possessed such names as Crickett, Shave-Tail and Dallas. The barns were located at what is now the Newberry's store on the Downtown Mall.

The mule streetcar system was operated under Holden and his son's tutelage until 1900 when they sold it to W. B. Dennis, a Lane County miner. But Dennis only operated the system for seven months before it went under for what was described at the time as "lack of business."

In 1907 the Eugene City Council granted a franchise to the Willamette Valley Co. The company was to build a streetcar line down Willamette Street and then along 11th Avenue to the University. From there it would continue to travel east past Judkins Point, through the Glenwood area and across the Willamette River into Springfield.

But before work ever got underway, the franchise was sold to the Eugene & Eastern Railway Co., which later changed its name to the Pacific, Eugene and Eastern Railway Co.

In the ensuing months, Willamette Street was paved with the help of stone from Skinner Butte. Rails were shipped in and by summer four streetcars were delivered from St. Louis. Each cost \$8,000 and were capable of carrying 100 passengers. The 45-foot long cars also were equipped with airbrakes and electric heaters.

A year later the first automobile in Eugene arrived from Portland. But it would be a few years before it would make its mark. The auto was still considered an impractical and expensive luxury and not overly dependable. It took two days to reach Portland by auto compared to five hours by

electric train.

On September 26, 1907, the first streetcar in seven years carried city officials from downtown out to the University and back. Along the way bands played, banners waved and students climbed up on the roof of the streetcar and rode it to the University.

The streetcar company also constructed a six-mile line that ran out West 11th Avenue and then up into College Hill before returning to Willamette Street and the downtown depot.

It took three years, though, for tracks to be extended into Springfield. A bridge had to be constructed over the Willamette River at a cost of \$30,000 and there were right-of-way problems in the Glenwood area. From Judkins' Point, the track was constructed on a trestle.

Finally, on October 22, 1910, the first streetcar pulled into Springfield and stopped at 3rd Avenue and Main Street.

The whole occasion was jovial and upbeat. "We would like to see Springfield as big as New City and Eugene as big as London," one official said.

The new streetcars were used for pleasure trips by anyone who could afford the trip. In Glenwood there was an old ball park where local teams would play out-of-town squads. The streetcar was a natural way to get there and every Sunday during baseball season hundreds of people would ride out to see the game.

There were other thrills as well. In November 1911, Springfield voted to become "wet." Eugene, of course, was "dry" as was a good part of the state.

"Springfield will be an oasis for the wayfarer bon vivant in his arid

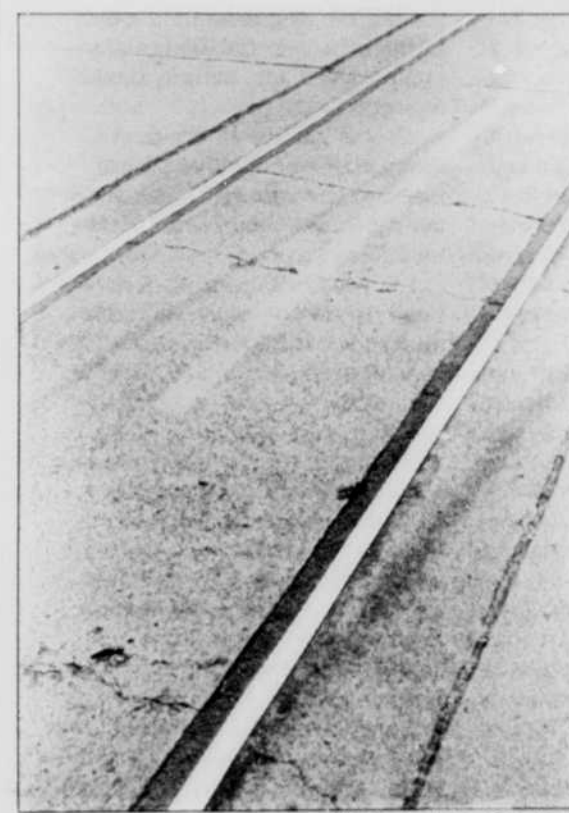
Photo by John Giustina

pilgrimage between Salem and Medford — the only convivial sanctuary where will flow unchecked the foaming fruit of the keg."

In later years, more tracks were laid, including a Fairmount loop that went up University Street to the Masonic Cemetery, over to Columbia Street and then down Moss Street. The rails on University Street still can be seen today, exposed by cracks in the asphalt. And over on Columbia Street whole sections of the track swirl up the road.

In 1927, with the automobile less expensive and more practical, the streetcar system in Eugene went out of business for good. In its place arrived local bus service, which has survived to the present day.

— STEPHEN MAHER



Courtesy of Lane County Historical Museum

Streetcar number 867, the Fairmount trolley, traveled up University Street to the vicinity of 24th Avenue and then back to 13th Avenue by way of Columbia and Moss streets. On occasion drivers had to push the cars back on the rails after children placed rocks on the tracks (far left). Rails remain in the middle of Columbia Street as shiny now as they were 60 years ago. Note the painted line for autos (left). A streetcar travels down Willamette Street heading to Springfield. In the background is Skinner Butte (above). Cars crossing over the rails is a common scene on Columbia Street. A few yards up the road the rails end in a patch of grass (below middle). Total mileage of the streetcar system stretched to 14 miles before it was discontinued in 1927. Service was available to the River Road, College Hill and Fairmount areas.

The Ghost of the Trolley

In Eugene only memories and a few exposed rails remain.

The old streetcar system is gone today. Gone for sixty some years. The only reminder of the clanging, swaying trolleys are a few rails that lie in the southeast part of the city.

Although the streetcar era in Eugene lasted only 29 years, it was marked by a romanticism not seen today. People loved riding the cars, whether it was through the countryside or down city streets. And for the times it was quick, convenient and practical.

The first streetcars providing transportation for Eugeneans, however, were not electric. The energy to pull the cars came from a more casual source: mules. The system operated in Eugene from 1891 to 1900 and was the pride, and sometimes the humor, of the city.

The first system was built by H. W. Holden, a Texan, who received a franchise to build the system from the Eugene City Council in April

1891. Not long after, Holden announced the streetcar system would be named the "Eugene and College Hill Street Railway."

By the time the line opened on June 24 of that year, tracks had been laid from the railroad depot on Willamette Street, south to 11th Avenue, and then east to the University. Another branch line traveled out Willamette Street to the College Hill area, bringing the total length of Eugene's streetcar system to roughly three miles.

On July 4 an estimated 20,000 visitors flocked to Eugene for what a Eugene City Guard reporter described as "the grandest 4th of July celebration ever held in Oregon, outside of Portland." The festivities included a hose race among competing fire departments, a glass ball shooting contest, a fireworks display and a mock battle between Oregon National Guard companies.

With all the festivities surrounding the opening

of the streetcar system, no one doubted the success of the city's newest endeavor. But there were inherent problems and they became apparent when the winter rains came and stayed.

"During the winter of 1891-92, unpaved Willamette Street became a mud bath and the system's tracks began to settle. It took several days for workers to repair the surface so that the rails would be resting on an even grade again.

The mules also presented problems. When the cars were overloaded, the mules couldn't get the car rolling down the tracks. In those cases, the passengers themselves would have to get out and begin pushing.

Like the automobiles of today, the streetcars of yesteryear boasted "extras." The seats were reversible and could be shifted every time a car reached the end of a line. There also was a "dog box" located near the driver where passengers were re-

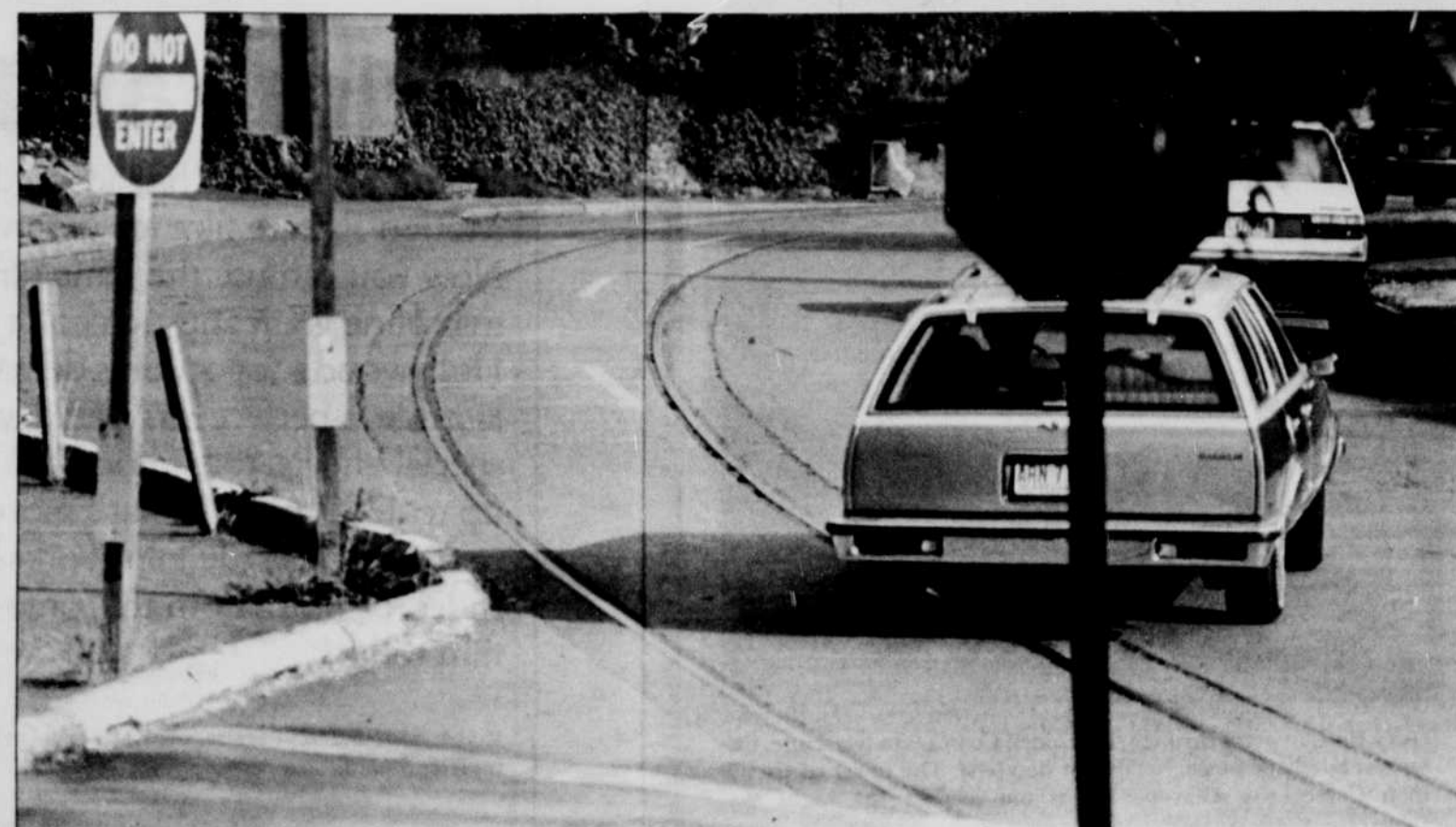
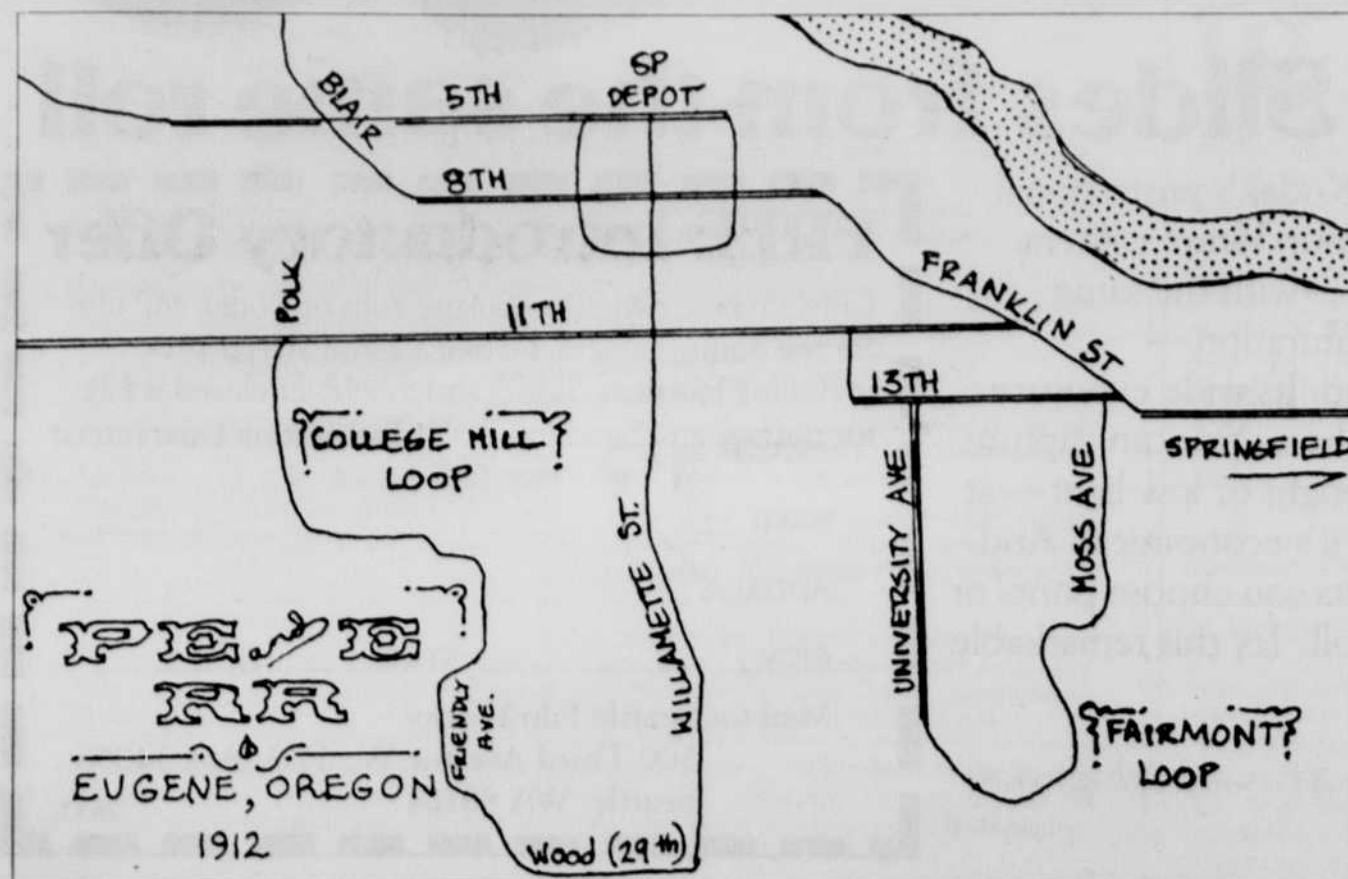


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