

Trolley Car Days - Trooper to Harleysville

By Harry Foesig

Although this series of trolley talks centers about lines entering Lansdale, it seems fitting to include the line from Trooper to Harleysville, only six miles distant, because of the possibility, thought of as certainty through the early years, of extension to Lansdale, either directly or by connection with the Montgomery Traction line already running through Gwynedd Square.

Despite almost total lack of the resistance experienced elsewhere to the building of trolley lines, this one succeeded in becoming the slowest built line in the county. The absence of crossovers, so frequently to plague other roads, is mute evidence of no serious objections by property owners along the line, and there was not, throughout its length, a single railroad to contend its progress. The route traveled through open country and touched only four small villages in its course.

Talked about since the late 1800's, this long awaited road was incorporated in 1902 as the Souderton, Skippack & Fairview Electric Railway Co., to run from Trooper to Souderton. It was built under the direction of George Hoeger, put in charge of operations of Schuylkill Valley Traction Co. in 1901, as part of that system. The name was later shortened to Montgomery County Rapid Transit Co., and finally, Montgomery County Traction Co.

The obvious benefits from connecting with other lines would be present in connection with S.V.T.Co. at Trooper and L.V.T.Co. at Souderton. Unfortunately, building stopped at Harleysville, short of its goal, where, in the words of a former Souderton resident, "Work did not go beyond the throwing of a few shovels of dirt and they worked only as long as the money came in."

Surveys were not finished until 1904, an agonizing delay, and there was indecision whether to run to Souderton as originally planned or to go to E. Greenville, largely in

Anyone sending us the exact date will be entitled to a year's subscription to this paper."

On the route actually constructed, one destined to be the

most picturesque in the county, the line left Trooper on the southeast side of Township line road., to go diagonally through the fields to Fairview Village. After a short detour

through a wooded area it ran along the southeast side of what is now Route No. 363. (Trolley fans will have difficulty tracing the old route near Fairview due to extensive rerouting of the highway.)

Swinging wide over private right-of-way, the line ran along the southwest side of Skippack pike (Route No.73) to pass through Skippack on the center of the main street. The concrete piers can still be seen where the line crossed Skippack Creek just beyond Cedars. Then along the east side of Old Skippack road (Route No.113) to reach Lederachville (Lederach) and along the northwest side to swing to the center in Harleysville.

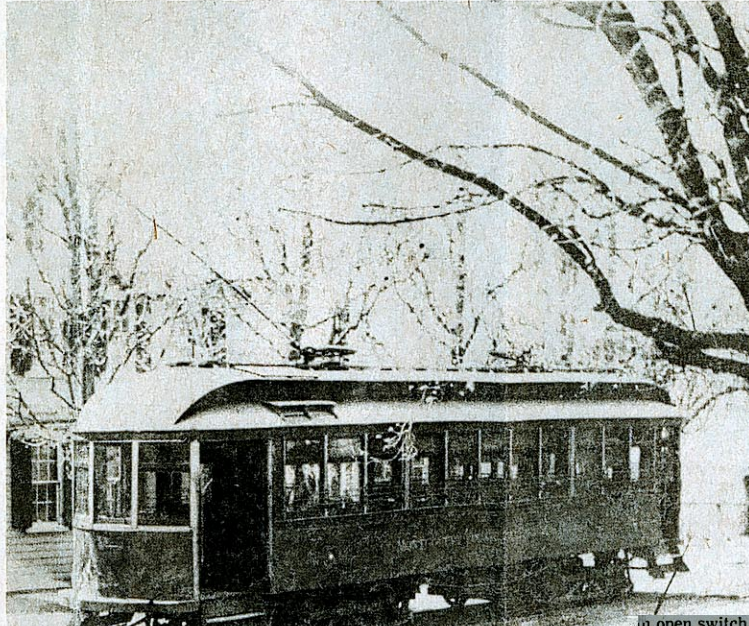
The terminus at Trooper was, at times, extended to Main and DeKalb streets in Norristown.

The first car, an open or "summer" car, accompanied by a band and fireworks, left Norristown at 8 p.m. July 20, 1907, to go to the end of the line (at that time) at Worcester (Center Point) seven miles away. Cars reached Wentz's Church April 1908 and Skippack July 4, the same year, but were not running through to Harleysville until Nov. 18, 1912.

When two large, double-truck cars were put on the line in late October, 1907, an elaborate two-page spread in the Montgomery Transcript included illustrations of these beautiful cars, eleven windows on a side and with the luxury of a smoking compartment. They were described as painted a rich green, with lemon yellow trim and gold striping.

Apparently this line, referred to by one commentator as "like something that never was," was not too successful. The company did little to improve equipment after stopping at Harleysville, beyond acquiring three small, new cars in 1916, but long-time residents fondly remember the convenience of the little "wogglebug" in a section otherwise completely without public transportation.

Any formalities planned for celebration of the last run Sunday night, June 7, 1925, were dashed that afternoon,



Car No. 1

At Skippack—

1908

in open switch and