



Citizens Railway:

Electric Trolley Graces Sheridan Boulevard

With its wide, stately medians, Sheridan Boulevard is one of the grandest avenues in Lincoln. Interestingly, its beautiful medians were not planned as a home for towering evergreens or lovely landscaping which now reside there. Rather, they were designed to be used for a railway.

For over thirty years, an electric trolley ran down the center of Sheridan Boulevard.

According to Ed Zimmer, Historic Preservation Planner with the Planning Department, the idea for the new trolley line

began in the early 1900's. Mark and Frank Woods, prominent local developers, had a vision of a grand boulevard with a trolley running down the middle. They also recognized the need for convenient transportation between College View and downtown Lincoln.

When the Woods brothers began laying out the tract of land known as Sheridan Place (24th to 27th Streets and South to Park Streets), the geographic ridge

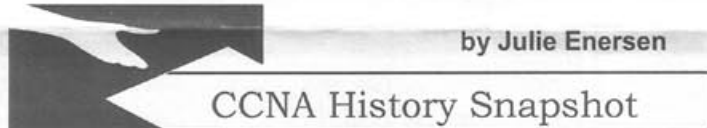
which ran south from South Street provided the perfect opportunity to realize their dream and fulfill the transportation need.

Mark Woods' son, Pace Woods, Sr., would later recall riding in a cart from South Street with his father and dropping rocks and American flags to show Lincolnites where a future line of the Citizens Railway would be.

At the time, Lincoln had numerous other trolley lines most of which were owned by Lincoln Traction Company, a business with a local-sounding name, but

(Continued on page 2)

by Julie Enersen



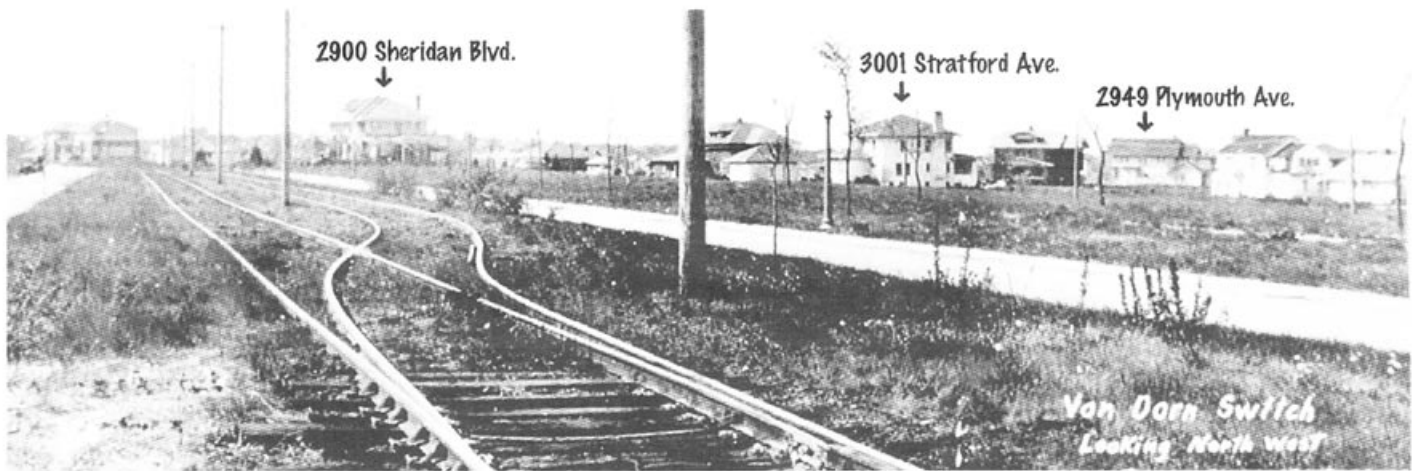
CCNA President's Message . . . by Jim Pattavina

A few weeks ago we had a great annual meeting on a beautiful spring night; I got my wish for good weather. CCNA added a number of board members to the existing board and we are looking to expand our scope of operations in the next few months. Last year was a year of rebuilding and this year is likely to be one of growth.

We left a few important things for the general meeting on April seventeenth, for example: electing the officers for the year, maintenance of the common spaces in the neighborhood, final plans for the garage sale, additional plantings for the common spaces and reports from committees. If you have any concerns, you should call and leave a message at 435-CCNA (435-2262). The recorder is always on.

Those of you who paid your dues before April will be happy to know that the information you supplied has been enshrined in a small database, and we intend to use this technology to contact you when we are doing something where you indicated an interest or a willingness to help. We no longer use the old "section leader" plan to contact individual neighbor members; with messaging, computer databases and eventually e-mail and a web site, we will be able to communicate faster, better and easier than ever before. Look for more information on these innovations in the next few months. My email address is: jamespattavina@prodigy.net. I hope you have a great spring, I know mine will be wonderful.

Next Meeting Notice
Tuesday, May 15, 2001
7:00 p.m.
St. Matthew's Church



This 1921 photo, with a view to the northwest, shows a portion of the trolley track running from Van Dorn.
 Photo Courtesy of Lincoln Planning Department

(Continued from page 1)

out-of-town ownership. The Woods brothers' decision to include a new rail system in their plans was fueled by an increasing dissatisfaction with the service provided by the out-of-town operators and the assumption that a

locally owned railway would be a selling point with some of Lincoln's wealthier residents. (Later, all of the tracks in Lincoln, including the Citizens line, were consolidated under Lincoln Traction, but by that time the company was locally owned and operated.)

The fare for the Sheridan trolley was a nickel for a ride from downtown to the stop at 33rd and Sheridan. At that point, passengers who wished to continue on to College View would then pay an additional penny. Thus, the bridge at 33rd and Sheridan was referred to as "Penny Bridge" for many years. Neil Rowland, a longtime Lincoln resident and frequent trolley passenger, recalls boarding on 48th Street in front of the College and riding to the end of the line at the Terminal Building (which is still standing on the southwest corner of 10th and O.)

"In those days not many of us had cars and the trolley was our only means of transportation. The ride was a peaceful, leisurely one through the most luxurious residential section of the city at that time."

During the 20's, trolley cars in Lincoln were gradually phased out by companies such as General Motors who bought the railways and replaced them with buses.

By the 30's, most trolleys in Lincoln and Omaha had been replaced. However, at the outbreak of World War II, a law was passed which stated that any company still operating an electric street railway in December of 1941 was required to keep operating the service because the repair on the trolleys did not deplete precious resources and the use of electricity was very efficient. This delayed the inevitable demise of the railway for several years, but when the war ended, so did trolley service down Sheridan Boulevard.

The trolley took its last trip on V-J Day, August 15, 1945.

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Members and readers who have questions, comments or suggestions may call the individual(s) responsible for the area(s) of concern.

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Do you have a piece of history or an interesting house that you would like to see featured in a future CCNA CHRONICLE? If so, please contact Julie Enersen at 475-9988 or enersen@inebraska.com.