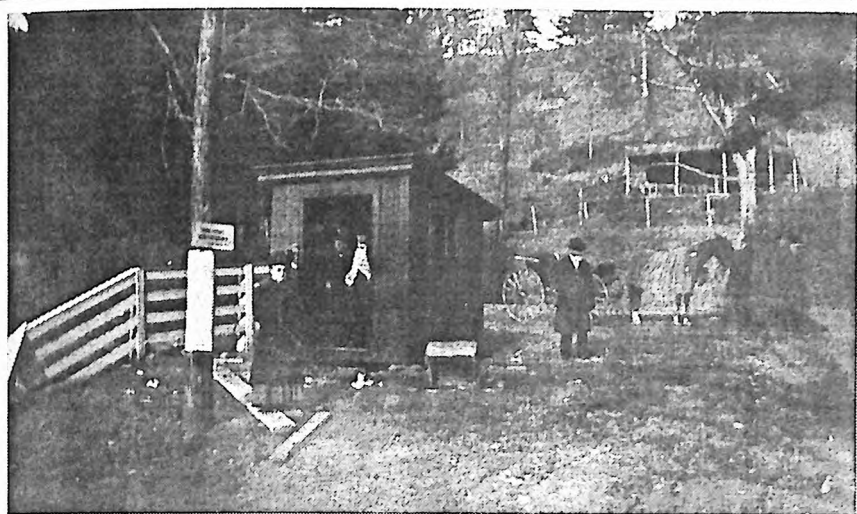


THE SHORE LINE ELECTRIC RAILWAY
AND
THE GREAT NORTH BRANFORD TROLLEY
WRECK

by
EDNA HALL



North Branford Trolley Station

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THE ORIGINS OF THE SHORE LINE ELECTRIC RAILWAY:

In looking for a starting date for the Shore Line Electric Railway, Mrs. Ruth Beers Arnold was asked, "Off the top of your head could you tell when the trolley first ran through North Branford?" Her prompt reply was, "Why yes, it was November 1911. My son Earl was six months old and I took him for a ride on the new trolley line."

From "A Modern History of New Haven and Eastern New Haven county", in Volume II, published 1918, from pages 156 and 157, "No history of North Branford would be complete without reference to Nathan Harrison, who spent his entire life within its borders, living always in the same house...."

"Mr. Harrison was a very progressive citizen and public-spirited man and did much for the improvement and welfare of the community in which he lived. He labored most earnestly to have the telephone company put in lines in the rural district of North Branford and did much to kindle an interest in this project and keep it alive. He was also greatly interested in the project of building the Shore Line Electric railway through North Branford and offered to donate a mile of ties, poles, etc. if the line would be built. He also offered pole equipment to the telephone company in order to get them to establish a telephone line in North Branford."

The Shore Line Times, Thursday, November 2, 1911 reports the following:

"The Shore Line Electric Railway Company started work on Sunday morning as stated in this paper last Thursday that it proposed to, to place the roadbed between Guilford and New Haven on the new line in a condition that will warrant the required speed and safety. It has been figured out that the run must be made from Guilford Green to Ferry Street in New Haven in just thirty minutes and if this is to be done the road must be in first class condition

which the company proposes that it shall be. Unless conditions are found that are not anticipated and the weather holds favorable the cars will be running to New Haven for passenger accommodation in about ten days. This will be gratifying to a great number of people who wish to patronize the road daily. While the company has made no agreement in this direction it is reasonable to believe that after the road is in good working condition that commutation rates will be forthcoming."

The Shore Line Times, Thursday, November 9, 1911:

"At last the management of the Shore Line Electric Railway Company sees its way clear to make a statement of when it plans to open the new line from Guilford to New Haven for business, which is Monday, November 20th. The work is progressing so satisfactorily that the above date has been fixed for the opening of the line unless something unforeseen happens to prevent it."

"While no definite statement could be given out regarding permanent stations, Superintendent Welton said that 'on paper' the stations were marked out for Quinnipiac Avenue, New Haven; Foxon Corners, Totoket Road near the blacksmith shop, Ford's Corner, North Branford; Long Hill Road between foot of hill and crossing; York Street where (the) line leaves (the) highway near the former storehouse of the construction company, Spencer's factory and the Green, the three latter stations in Guilford. The time schedule is not completed and will not be definite until after cars have been run for a try-out of time which is planned for thirty minutes to Ferry Street from Guilford Green. Turn-outs will be at North Branford and Totoket, the first having been completed. At present it looks probable that the first car for New Haven

will leave at 6:30 or 6:45 and hourly thereafter. Just the minute for the last car to leave Ferry Street is not decided upon at this date but Superintendent Welton says that it will be late enough to accommodate theater attendance. While no demonstration is planned or probable, never the less there will be great rejoicing when the line is in satisfactory operation."

The Shore Line Times, Thursday, November 9, 1911:

"A Word of Past, Present, Future"

"As before stated in these columns city people are all ready talking of utilizing the trolley by coming from New Haven to live in Guilford. The editor of this paper has three New Haven business men on his list who are looking for places out here where they can once more get next to the soil. They want places where they can keep a cow and a few chickens with a little ground to till for pastime and which is handy to the steam and trolley roads."

The Shore Line Times, Thursday, November 9, 1911:

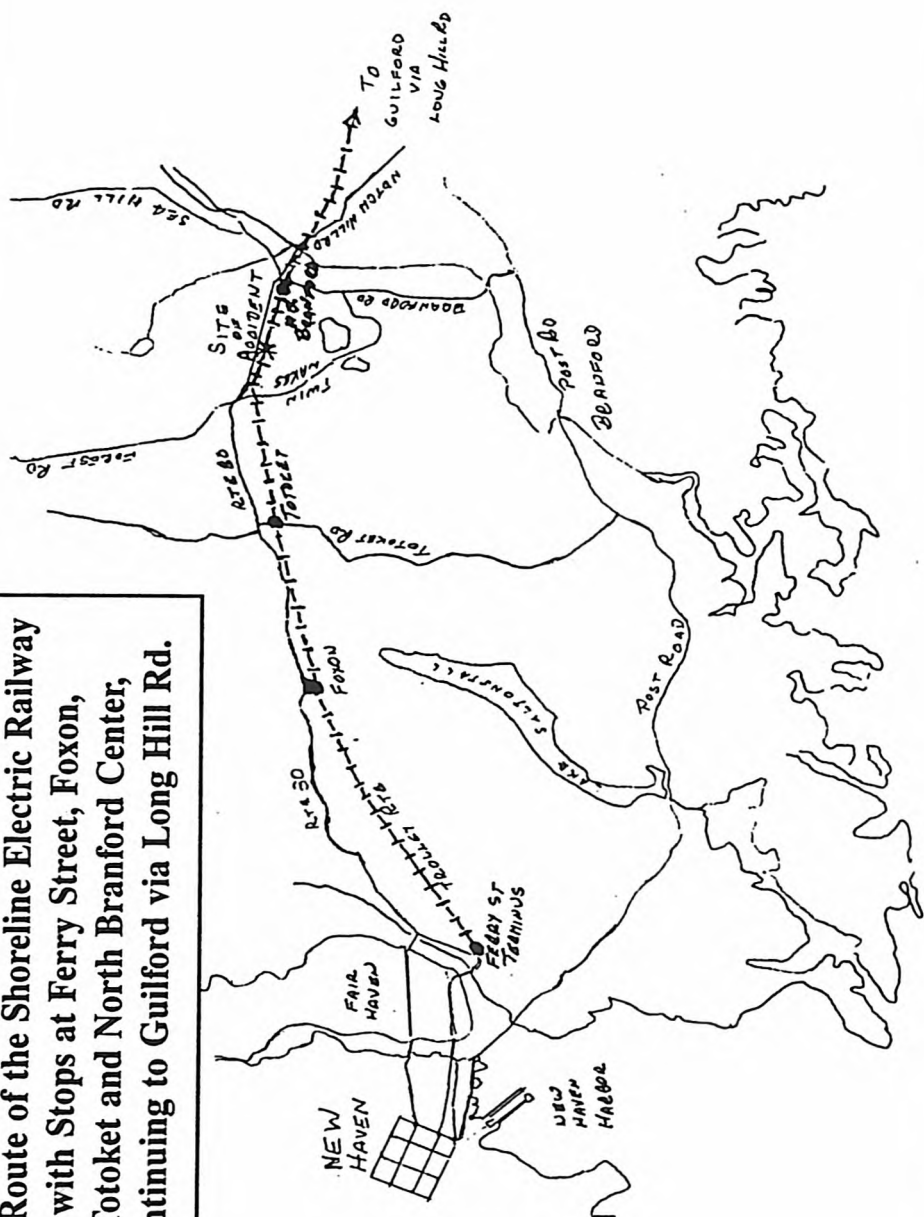
Prepare your nickels for rides over the new trolley railway from Guilford to New Haven by way of North Branford and into Ferry Street, Monday November 20, 1911. The first car will leave Guilford Green at 6:30 and will be at Ferry Street at 7:00."

"New time schedule for the use of conductors of the line is now in the hands of the printers and will be ready Friday afternoon. Public time tables will be published at as early a moment as possible. The schedule calls for cars leaving Guilford going west hourly on the half hour after 6:30 am, the last car leaving New Haven at mid-night. The fare

from Guilford Green to New Haven city line will be 15 cents. This on the face of it does not read that it entitles a passenger to transportation to Ferry Street but never the less the company will carry all passengers to Ferry Street for fifteen cent fare from the East Creek fare limit in Guilford until such time as arrangements can be made with the Connecticut Company. Whenever the result of traffic negotiations between the two companies the fare from Guilford to the center of the city, including the nickel over the city line will be but twenty cents instead of twenty-five cents as the public had expected. This is very important revelation and one that will be appreciated."

"C.C. Elwell, Chief Engineer of the Public Utilities Commission, went over the road today starting from New Haven."

**The Route of the Shoreline Electric Railway
with Stops at Ferry Street, Foxon,
Totoket and North Branford Center,
Continuing to Guilford via Long Hill Rd.**



TROLLEY SERVICE COMMENCES:

The New Haven Evening Register, Monday, November 20, 1911:

“Regular service over the new branch of the Shore Line Electric railway Company between this city and Guilford began this morning and the cars from Guilford carried a goodly number of passengers. The Guilford cars will leave the corner of Middletown Avenue and Ferry Street on the even hour. They will make the run in about 30 minutes.” This appeared on the front page.

In the same day's issue under Guilford news:

“New Trolley System Begins New Run”

“The first cars to run for traffic over the North Line for New Haven left at 6:40 this morning, ten minutes late. There were eight passengers when it arrived here and about twenty boarded it here. There was no demonstration of any kind but most of those who went on the first car went for the ride and returned on the same. The first car left here for the east at the same time. The last car will leave New Haven, Ferry Street at Twelve Mid-night with no car at eleven o'clock, otherwise every hour from 7:00 a.m.. Running time from Ferry Street to Guilford Green 29 minutes.”

The Shore Line Times, Thursday, November 23, 1911:

“The New Trolley Now Operating”

“Cars started running to New Haven on Monday morning. The schedule time between Guilford and

New Haven is thirty minutes and the fare fifteen cents for a distance of thirteen and one tenth miles in comfortable, smooth running cars. The road is well patronized."

"There isn't another line of trolley road in the state that is making thirteen and one tenth miles in thirty minutes or less, hour after hour, but that is what Guilford's new trolley has been doing for the past four days. There is a big demand for time tables by the public but as the company has not definitely accepted the time schedule under which the conductors are now running their cars they do not authorize the printing of a schedule for public distribution at present but this will be done as soon as a settled schedule is accepted. Passengers from New Haven to towns of the Shoreline Electric Railway can take cars at the corner of Church and Chapel Streets marked State Street or Schutzen Park. A car at fifteen minutes of the hour, if not blocked, will reach the corner of State and Ferry Streets in time for the Shore Line but the car at twenty-five minutes of the hour is surer. Though a Ferry Street car can be taken it will land passengers three or four blocks away from the corner of Middletown Avenue, so that the most convenient cars are those stated, State Street or Schutzen Park, which make the run to the corner of State and Ferry in about thirteen minutes. It is a minutes walk across the bridge to a Guilford car. The fare from Guilford to Ferry Street is fifteen cents. This is a bold comparison to the first trip J. Douglas Loper, one of Guilford's oldest citizens paid for his first trip to New Haven over the New Shore Line Railroad many years ago which was eight cents."

New Haven Evening Register, Tuesday, November 28, 1911,
Guilford News:

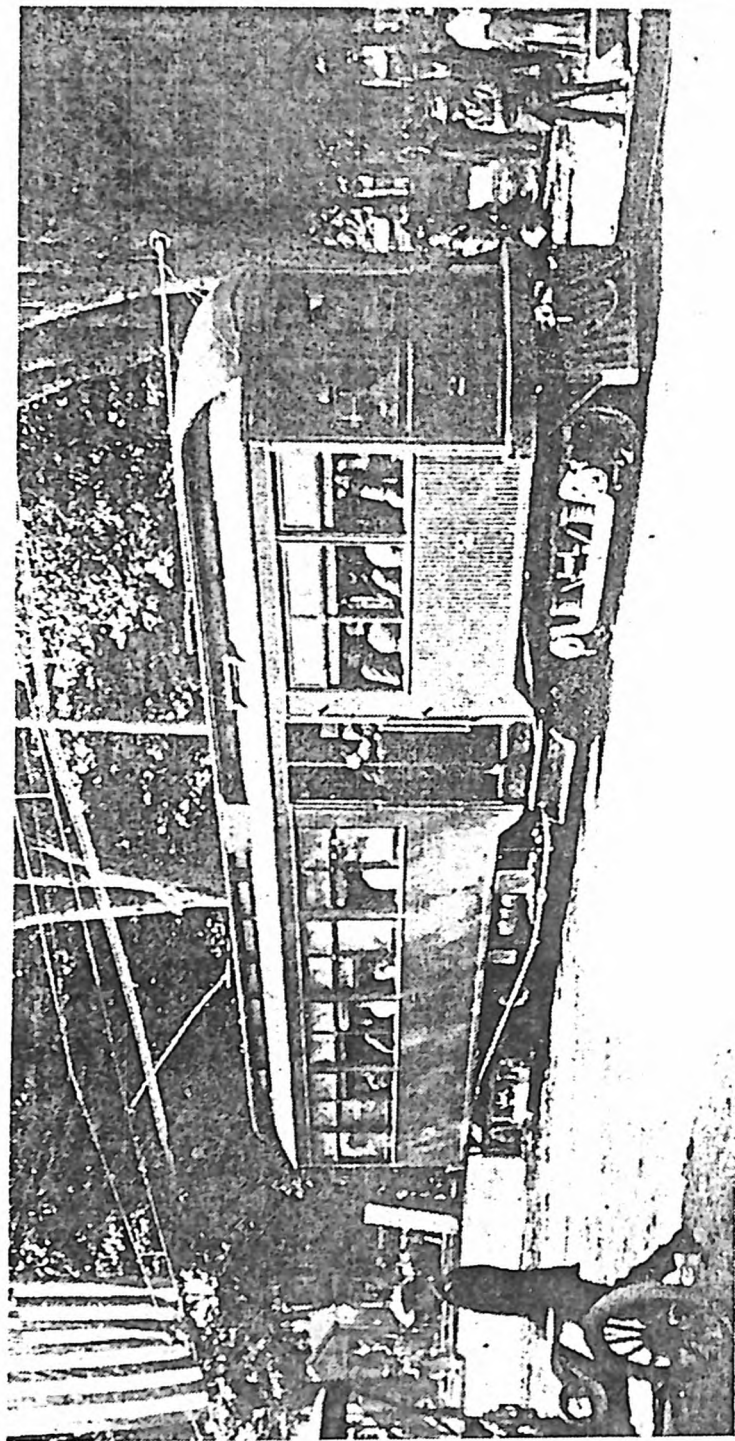
"New Trolley Service Gets Good Patronage"

"The new trolley line to New Haven was well patronized Sunday, all day. In the afternoon and evening all cars were packed to their standing room capacity. One noticed in particular the 6:30 p.m. west bound. There were about forty waiting to board it at the green and when it came in from the east it was already filled. On Sunday the 9:30 p.m. car runs through to New Haven and that being the last car, while the last car east leaves New Haven terminal at 10:00 p.m.."

You may ask where did this trolley run through North Branford? It entered the town line from East Haven through the meadows to Totoket Road, the first stop in town. The Totoket Road stop was two tenths of a mile south of the present Route 80. It then went across the fields to Twin Lake road, just south of Route 80, where the power line now runs. From there it was up-hill on what is now Route 80 (the main road, so called in those days, was higher on the mountain and went directly by the New Haven Trap Rock Company office) and under the Trap Rock railroad bridge to the center station at a point about where Route 80 and Route 139 join. At this stop there was a waiting station and a delivery station. Supplies for the general store, newspapers, etc. were sent out to the village by the trolley and picked up at this station. From this stop the trolley proceeded toward Guilford, going down in back of the administration building, across Notch Hill Road by Attorney Bruno's house, down the so-called 'old dump road, through the woods to West Pond Road in Guilford.

The Shore Line Times, Thursday, November 30, 1911:

"The first week of travel over the new trolley line to New Haven passed and the patronage has been highly encouraging. Almost everyone from towns on the line to the east as well as from Guilford bound for New Haven is taking advantage of the quick, frequent and cheap mode of travel and a big hole is being made in the receipts of the steam railroad company's passenger receipts, the local station being almost deserted at the time. Last Sunday the traffic was enormous, every car from the middle of the morning until late at night being crowded to the limit of standing room and many



The Shoreline Company's Jewett Model No. 2
on the Guilford Green, c. 1910

were obliged to wait for later cars especially on the return trips at night. The 6:30 car from Guilford to New Haven registering 142 passengers west of Guilford and at almost every station between some could not be taken aboard. With this heavy traffic it was impossible to keep up the schedule and some cars were a half hour late. There is considerable complaint for having to wait out in the weather for cars at the New Haven end of the line which is certainly disagreeable but it is hoped that this will not be continued long as plans are being drawn for a comfortable waiting station which the company realizes must be afforded their patrons."

' The Shore Line Times, Thursday, December 7, 1911:

"The traffic on the New Haven Trolley Line was heavy on Thanksgiving Day and Sunday, almost every car being crowded to the limit. If sufficient interest is manifested by residents of the shore line towns in the big celebration in New Haven on Friday, December 15th, when the 'great white way' will be opened the trolley company will run extra cars for the accommodation of the public. This event will be well worth attending and if all plans of the business men of New Haven are carried out it will be a great sight."

"People continue to be delighted with the service and when it is considered that a round trip can be made at a savings of thirty cents it is not to be wondered at. One can step on a car almost at their own door and disembark right in the center of the city in about forty minutes from Guilford."

Same paper as above— a separate article, "The Great White Way":

"The 'Great White Way' promises to be the most unique outdoor festival that the city has ever con-

ceived and carried out. As may be well known in this locality the enterprising merchants on Chapel, Orange and Church Streets have contracted with The United Illuminating Company of that city for the erection of numerous ornamental iron pillars surmounted by large and very handsome globes at frequent intervals along these busy thorough fares to be lighted by electricity and when the current is turned on the illumination will be wonderfully beautiful, making the streets as light as day, much after the order of New York's famous 'Great White Way'. It is planned to have the current turned on for the first time on Friday evening, December 15th, right in the busiest of the Christmas gift buying season. It is planned to have a monster street parade of decorated floats, marching companies and fraternal orders, Troop A of cavalry, decorated automobiles and several bands."

We can get a little better picture of this fantastic trolley from its background as found in 'The Shoreliner', the home town magazine of the River-Shore area, October 1949, page 8. Caption under the picture:

" The pride of the Shoreline Trolley Company back in the plush days of 1910. The Jewett Model No. 2 on the Saybrook Division could roll better than 60 miles an hour. The picture was taken at the Guilford green. (Courtesy Munger Photo Collection)"

" The last Shore Line trolley rattled and banged its way into obscurity more than twenty years ago, its only memorial a few stretches of track half-buried in Macadam roadbeds and trestle ruins. At one time though it was a huge transportation system with two hundred cars running over more than two hundred and fifty miles of track"

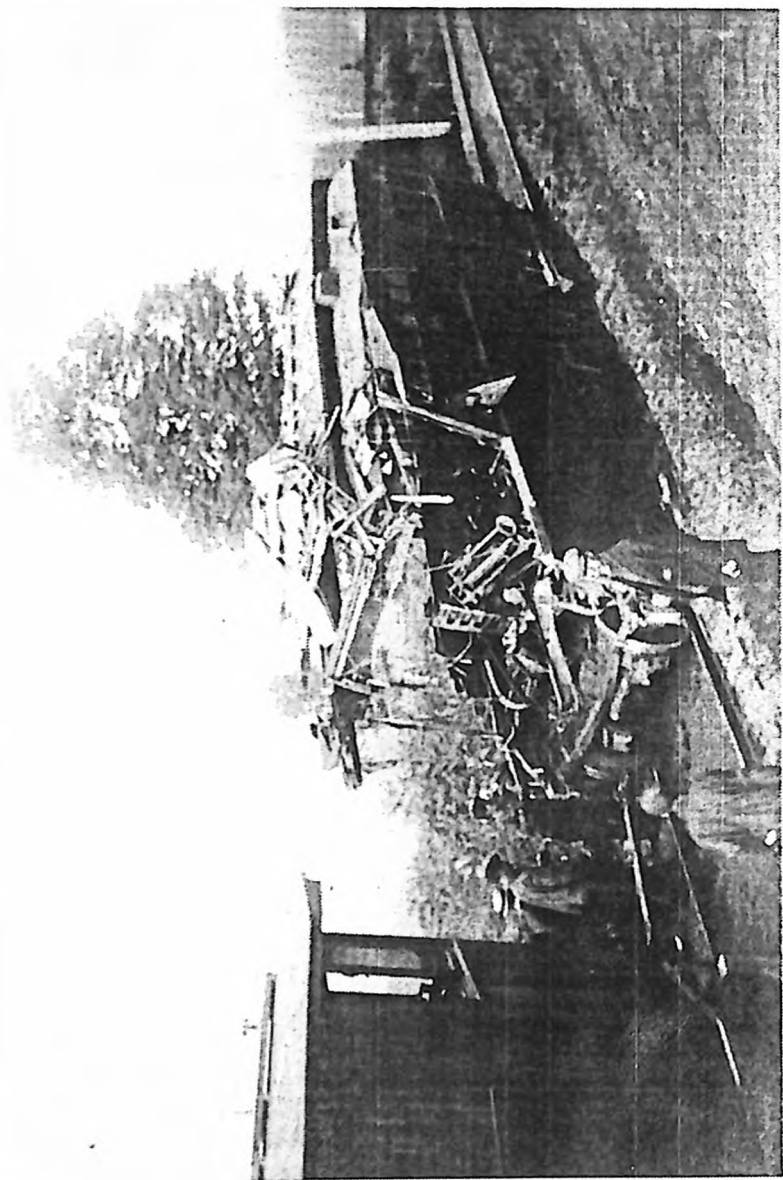
"The Shore Line Electric Railway was superior in every respect. Its thirty four ton Jewett cars were

bigger, faster and more comfortable than any others in New England. Painted a dark green, their plush interiors were divided between a parlor and a smaller 'smoking compartment'. Since they were both heavily powered and used twice as much current as the ordinary city trolley, they sometimes moved as fast as eighty miles per hour although they were scheduled to run at a slower pace."

Most of the time they would glide along private right-of-ways, pausing occasionally at a switch while a car passes from the opposite direction, then they would emerge at the side of a public road to enter a town and frighten the horses with loud whistle blasts. Parts of the old right-of-way are still visible, wandering erratically between Saybrook and New Haven. It was said of the builder that 'where there wasn't a curve he made one.', for there wasn't half a mile of straight track in the whole system."

"The Shore Line Electric Railway was a composite organization made up by lease and purchase of many smaller companies between New Haven and Rhode Island. The oldest link in the chain was built in 1894 for the Pawcutuck Valley Street Railway which ran between Westerly and Watch Hill , RI."

"The Shore Line itself sprang from just such humble beginnings in 1910 when it was confined between Ivoryton and Guilford. It soon pushed on to Stoney Creek, however, and the next year it acquired a right-Of-way through North Branford to the outskirts of New Haven where the luckless passengers were at first obliged to dismount, walk across the Ferry Street bridge and board a Connecticut Company trolley for the journey into the center of town. This hazard was soon removed, and a traveler could ride a Shore Line car from Weekapaugh, RI to the New Haven Railroad Station or north as far as Putnam."



The Wrecked Trolley Cars Shortly After the Accident - August 13, 1917

The guiding genius behind this expansion was Morton. F. Plant, a multi-millionaire from Groton. The son of a southern railroad magnate, he inherited a vast transportation empire which he managed with great skill and profit."

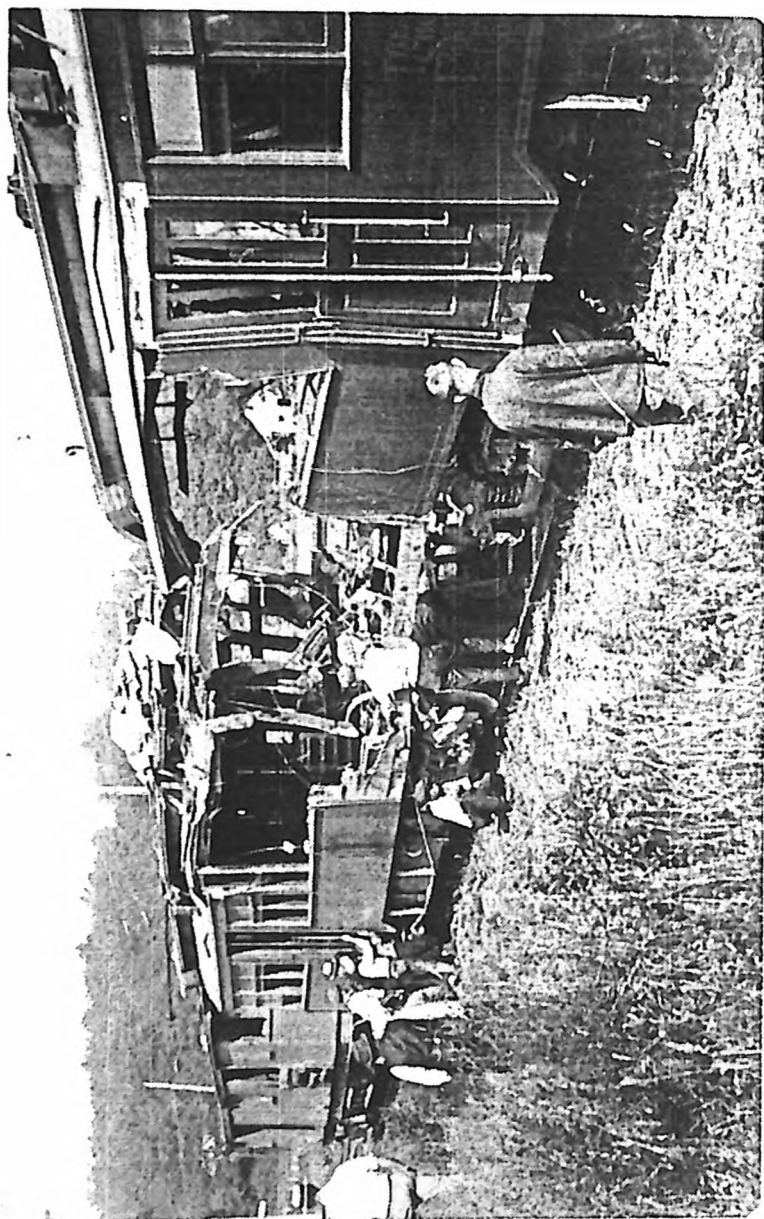
"Plant was a sportsman. He appears to have regarded the Shore Line Electric Railway as a hobby, also, and it cost him dearly."

Since the Shore Line used the equipment of many formerly independent companies, there was a certain amount of inevitable confusion. There were three number 20s and the number 24, for example, and many others were shared by only two cars. Although Brewster Green was the official company color, the job of repainting was never completed and the rolling stock often presented a motley appearance."

"The Shore Line's glory was brilliant but short-lived. The misfortunes which dogged its trail were numerous and expensive, and, without Plant's helping hand, it's doubtful it could have survived as long as it did. When he died in 1918, leaving most of his fortune to women's colleges, his trolley line sickened also and came to an untimely death."

THE DREADFUL ACCIDENT:

Mrs. Floyd Griswold tells me she remembered her husband of three months coming home very relieved to find her there on the evening of August 13, 1917. He said, "I'm glad you didn't decide to go to New Haven today. There has been a terrible wreck right in the center of North Branford and I was so afraid you might have been on one of those cars, as you mentioned going to town today".



Again, from the Shoreliner

."The first blow to the system was a head-on crash in North Branford on August 13, 1917, a tragedy in which nineteen people were killed. Wesley Negus, the motorman who survived, admitted that he knew he was supposed to wait at the switch until another car went by on the main track, but sleepy from overwork, he claimed he didn't wait. 'I was in a daze, I guess.' he said later."

"Pulling out of the North Branford station, he fastened his 'dead-man' control in the top-speed position with a roll of friction tape, a practice strongly condemned by company rules, and promptly fell asleep."

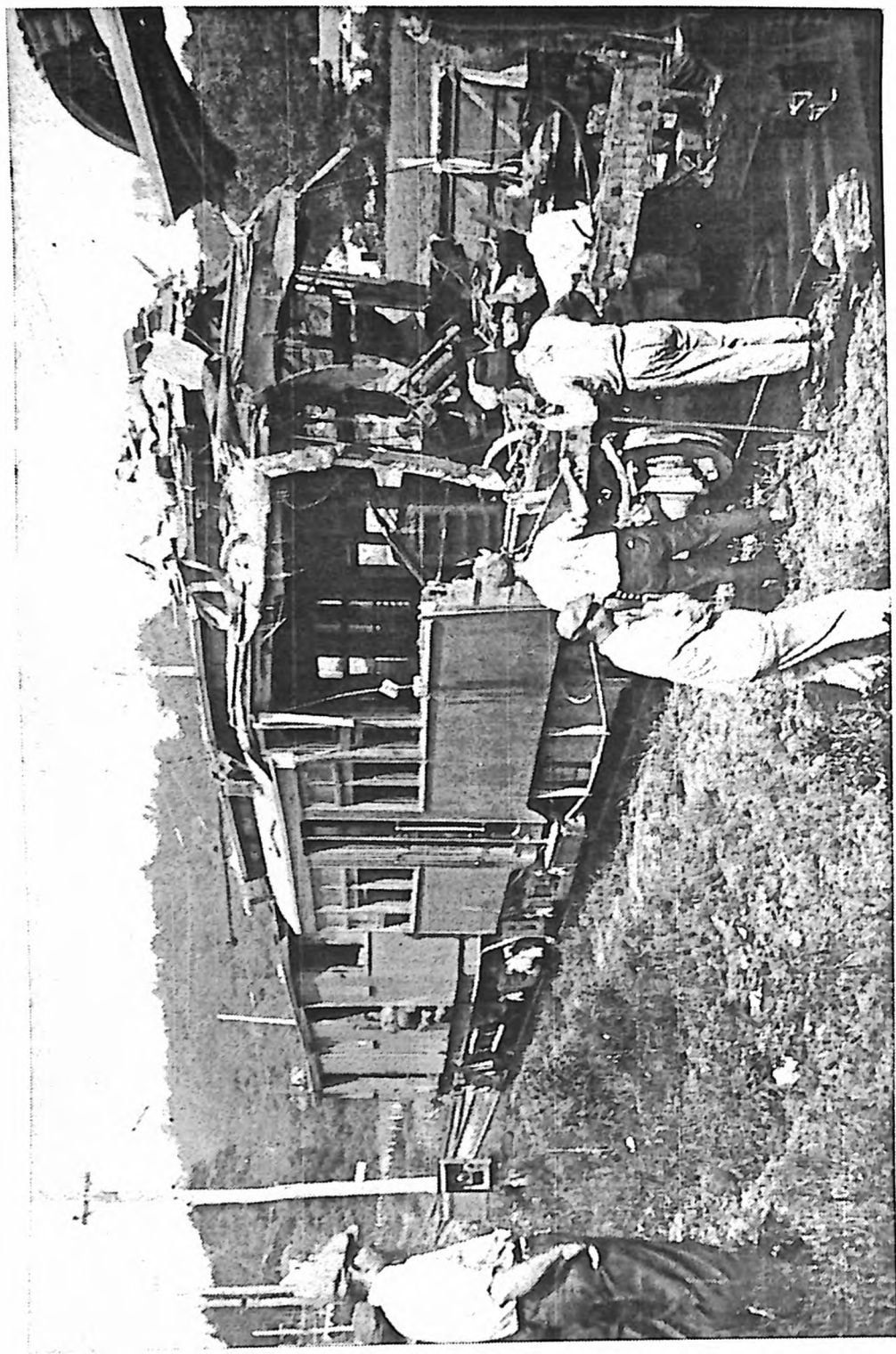
"Motorman Morris, coming in the opposite direction, was also far off in slumber bay. They met on a curve in broad daylight."

"Negus, awaking just in time to see what was going to happen leaped to safety, but Morris seems to have slept more soundly, for he never woke up. The two cars, the New Haven Register said in its graphic of the event, were 'crushed like paper boxes', and the bodies of the passengers were 'horribly mangled'. Negus went to jail."

The Shore Line Times, Thursday, August 16, 1917 (price 4 cents)

**"Worst and Most Horrible Catastrophe in the History of
Trolley Railroads in
New England"**

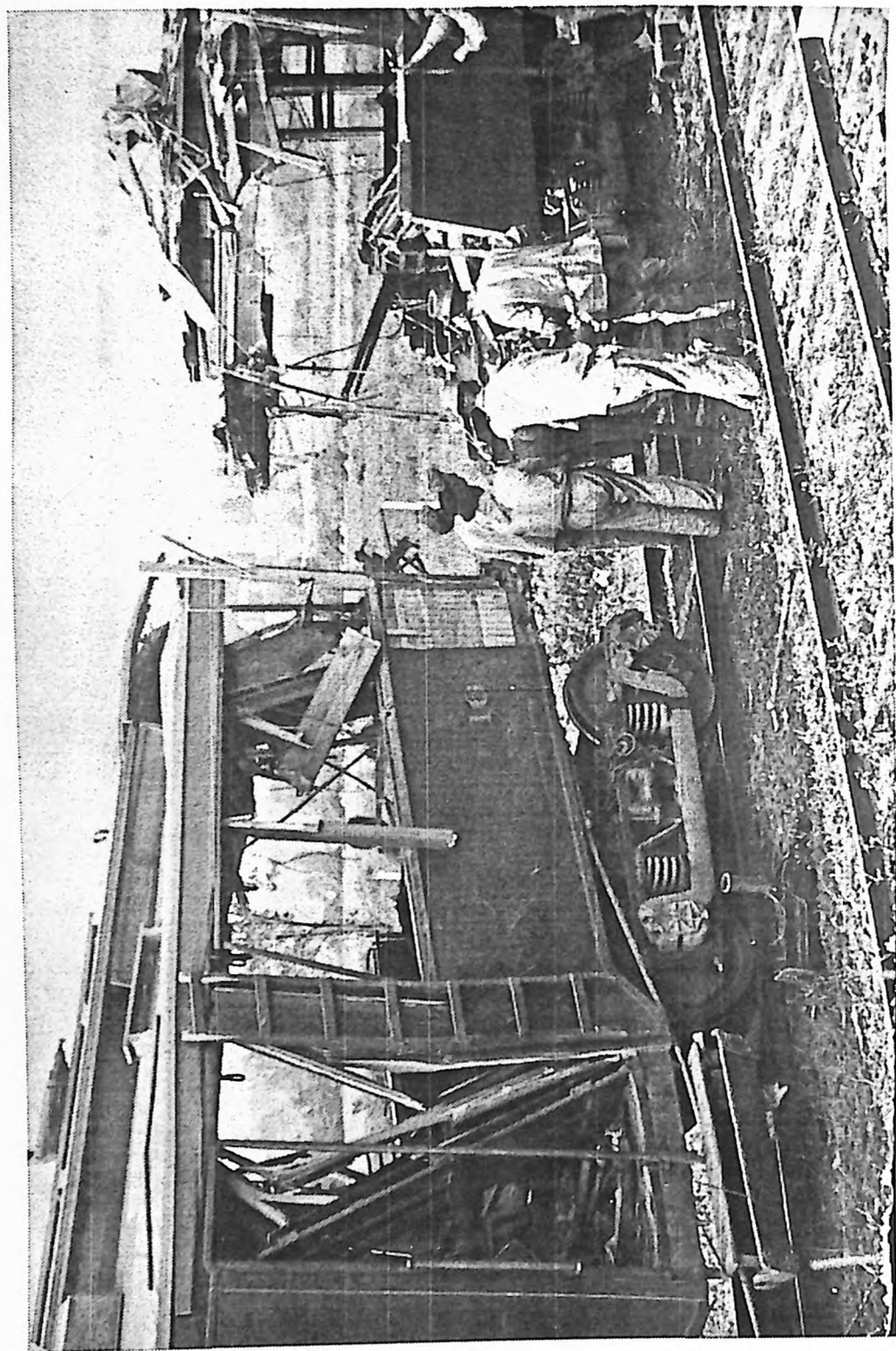
"Motorman ran by turnout where a car was to have passed.....Head-on collision at full speed.....Human beings crushed and mangled be-



yond immediate recognition.... The sight of headless beings hanging from windows and human limbs scattered here and there was a sight to test the stoutest hearts and nerves, Motorman Morris stuck to his post and was shot through the car top and his body horribly mangled."

"At 4:55 o'clock Monday afternoon, August 13, two cars of the Shore Line Electric Railway Company, #16 bound West and #2 bound East, telescoped each other in a collision in North Branford, just West of the overhead railroad bridge of the New Haven Trap Rock Company. The East bound car carried 52 passengers, being crowded as is customary at that hour, the West bound car carried only a dozen or so, few people being bound for the city in the late afternoon. Of those, 19 were instantly killed, 9 died soon after, and 22 were badly hurt."

"The accident was caused, it is generally reported, by motorman Negus of Guilford of the West bound car running by the siding east of the North Branford station where motorman Morris, of New Haven, of the East bound car was to have passed him, Morris was running a few minutes late owing to the heavy travel but would have passed the switch in a few minutes and all might have gone well had Negus obeyed orders. It is common rumor that Negus claimed that he had been on duty for 16 hours and was drowsy and failed to recall his orders to take the siding. In as much as he stopped at the North Branford station and took on a passenger, it is believed he must have been awake at that time and realized that the East bound car had not passed him. Attorney Whittlesey of New London represents the electric railroad and states that the crew had not been at work 16 hours but only an hour and a half after four hours and a half rest. He is reported to have said also, which is important 'the crew had been over the run six or seven times and were absolutely familiar with it'. An admission worth investigating in as much as a 'green



crew' should not be given charge of human lives after only 'six or seven times' running over such a road as the Shoreline. Killed from North Branford was John H. Cannon, insurance broker of New Haven on his way to his country home in North Branford. The injured suffered broken bones and bruises. ..."

"Into the quiet of the country afternoon in North Branford with Totoket Mountain towering on the one hand and the green fields with their ripening crops stretching away on the other was projected like a bolt from the blue the worst catastrophe ever known in this section and said to be the most serious accident in the trolley history of New England. The shriek of the car whistles and the crash of the impact were heard at the nearest houses and people ran to the scene. Walter Baldwin, watchman at the crossing close by, where the steam road of the Trap Rock Quarry crosses the highway on the way to Branford, was nearest and arrived first. He states that the crash was followed by screams. He immediately began to help carry out the injured, first attention being given to those who showed signs of life."

"The news of the collision reached Mrs. Alden Hill whose home is on the Branford Road, a quarter mile distant. With quiet efficiency she went at once to the telephone and summoned help, called doctors, ambulances, hospitals until Guilford, Branford and New Haven all had the S.O.S. call. Help arrived with almost incredible swiftness. The women of the neighborhood brought sheets for bandages and faced the scene of blood and suffering without thought of self, seeking only to give relief where possible. Meantime the men of the neighborhood were working swiftly to get the injured out of the wreckage. Walter Baldwin, his son William Baldwin, Charles Todd, Alden Hill, George Gedney, Frank Gilbert, Raymond and Leslie Fowler, Superintendent McKiernan of the Trap Rock Quarry and

others worked with superhuman energy. The injured who were able to get about forgot about themselves and turned to the relief of the worst sufferers. Shortly after six o'clock, a little more than an hour after the crash, the injured were being taken to the hospitals in New Haven and the dead laid carefully on the grass awaiting identification."

"Automobiles had been arriving swiftly and it is roughly estimated that there were 600 of them lining the highway on both sides and parked in every possible place. Now began the work of carrying away the dead. The large new automobile truck of Alden Hill of North Branford, the ambulances from New Haven and smaller cars removed the bodies to Branford, where fifteen were placed in Clancy's and four in Griswold's morgue. The heroism and moral courage of one little woman seems especially noteworthy. This was Mrs. Ira Thompson whose home is but a stone's throw from the trolley station in North Branford. Her son, Richard Thompson, had been in Boston and was expected home at any moment. Hearing the whistle of the approaching trolley, Mrs. Thompson stepped from her door and walked a few expectant steps to meet her soon as is her custom. Instead of seeing her son approaching she heard the crash and knew what had happened. She turned immediately back to her home and made preparations for caring for her son should he be brought to her injured. Her son did not come but others did, those who had been slightly hurt and needed things done that a woman could do. These she helped maintaining a First Aid Station and all the time not knowing what had happened to Richard. There came to her people who thought they had found her son among the killed and yet she worked on, It was not until several hours had passed that Mr. and Mrs. Thompson learned that their son had not been in the wreck at all."

"The accident took place on a curving down grade west of the North Branford trolley station. The steam road embankment and bridge on the east hides the approach in that direction and an abrupt curve shuts the track from sight in the west. The place of the collision was a stage curtained off and set for tragedy. The cars telescoped each other about half length so that the second occupied about the same trackage as one should do. The body of the west bound car was lifted from the tuck and mounted upon the debris of the other car carrying away the roof of the ends of both cars. Shattered glass, splintered wood, twisted metal, green plush covered seats, shattered and strewn odds and ends of shopping, a jar of cold cream, a cabbage, a loaf of bread, hand bags, a man's hat here, a woman's comb there formed a conglomeration of tragedy that is indescribable. How any living person escaped from the wreck is beyond understanding. The controller box, the motor cabs, the partitions were all annihilated. The body of Motorman Morris was taken out of the top of the car."

From the New Haven Journal-Courier, Friday, August 17, 1917:
Headlines

"Big Changes Promised in Shore Line System"

"Block Signals to be Installed—This is one of Several Plans of Superintendent Cain Unfolded before ICC Hearing—Printed Schedules, Too—Federal Probers End Work After Hearing Projects to Modernize Road"

"The Shore Line Electric Railway system will undergo an immediate and thorough reorganization that will modernize its equipment and operation, and maintain the high standard of efficiency demanded of a public utility having in its care the protection of life and limb. This was the promise

to the Interstate Commerce Commission probers last night after a day of exhaustive inquiry into the causes of the tragedy of Monday night when nineteen were killed and thirty injured in the head-on collision at North Branford."

"In the words of F.A. Howard, one of the ICC experts who conducted the inquiry: 'It's perfectly obvious that the Shore Line Electric Railway has been running pretty laxly. Now what we want to know is what it intends to do to give the public that guarantee of safety which they pay for and rightfully deserve.' To this General Superintendent of Transportation John W. Cain made these promises:

1. Installation as soon as possible of an automatic block signal system in place of the old telephone means of communication that now operates all over the system.
2. Other safety device equipment used by standard high speed systems.
3. A regularly issued time table of scheduled movement of cars over the system, which will be available for both employee and public.
4. Physical examination of employees and the introduction of written orders and prepared train sheets containing dispatcher's orders.
5. Discontinuance of use of switch telephones for any talk with dispatcher other than movement of cars.

This last recommendation, Superintendent Cain promised he would carry out this morning in the form of a written order to be enforced at once."

"The rest of the recommendations will be approved, it is expected, by the Shore Line Electric Railway management, for when Mr. Cain was brought here two weeks ago from the New York State Railway Company, it was with the express understanding that his suggestions be adopted by the company in so far as they concern the modernizing and standardization of the system."

"Superintendent Cain's statement: 'I have had practical railway experience since 1895. When I came to the Shore Line August first, General Manager Stratton and I decided to formulate at once definite plans for some very desirable improvements in the operating conditions of the property. I consider the present telephone system of the road very much inferior to the automatic block signal system. We intend to introduce the most advanced operating methods and modernize this property in order to bring it up to a high standard of efficiency. Unfortunately the time before the accident occurred was so short that we have been unable to make but little progress.'"

"William Tryon, conductor of the West bound car which, disregarding the siding stop rule on Monday night, caused the fatal wreck. He said he had worked sixty one hours the previous week and received sixteen dollars pay for it. 'The last stop east of North Branford I remember was at Guilford where two men got on. I think the car stopped again at West Pond but I am not sure. That is about two miles from North Branford. After that I don't know what happened. I don't know whether I went to sleep or fainted'."

WAR PRICES ARE HIGH BECAUSE WAR COSTS ARE HIGH

Unless the butcher could get for his meat more money than the meat costs him, he would have to stop selling meat. His customers understand this, they know his high costs, and they pay his high prices without grudge against him, realizing that his predicament is identical with their own. The struggle with us all isto get money enough to cover our heavy bills of expense.

The street railroad rates of Eastern Connecticut are about to be increased as a matter of public necessity.

STREET RAILROAD TRANSPORTATION is as VITAL TO THE COMMUNITY as the railroad and the telephone. Without it business would be paralyzed.

STREET RAILROAD TRANSPORTATION CANNOT BE MAINTAINED EXCEPT AS ITS REVENUES MEET ITS COSTS.

STREET RAILROAD TRANSPORTATION COSTS HAVE BECOME PROHIBITIVE on the basis of former revenues. THIS CONDITION IS TRUE EVERYWHERE and it cannot be altered by change of ownership or management. It has created a street railroad crisis as desperate in New York, Massachusetts and Pennsylvania as it has in Connecticut. THE MOVEMENT TOWARD INCREASE OF RATES IS A UNIVERSAL ONE.

In two years the operating cost of our street railroads has increased more than 30 per cent.

The cost of supplies has doubled.

Overhead charges have increased. Taxes have increased. Labor costs have increased. Every enumerable item of costs has startlingly increased.

EXISTING REVENUES ARE HOPELESSLY INADEQUATE. STREET RAILWAY CREDIT IS SADLY IMPERILED.

Continuation of this disparity between costs and revenues means the quick collapse of street railroad transportation. SERVICE, ALREADY SERIOUSLY IMPAIRED BY THE TASK OF HAULING PEAK LOADS WITH INSUFFICIENT FACILITIES OF POWER AND CARS AND MEN must come to calamitous breakdown, replacing deplorable inconvenience with downright hardship. Upon Eastern Connecticut there would be forced a ruinous decade of BUSINESS AND SOCIAL DISADVANTAGE out of which there could be but SLOW, PAINFUL AND MOST COSTLY EMERGENCE through any means of restoration imaginable.

THE TRUTH OF THESE STATEMENTS IS INCONTROVERTIBLY EVIDENCED by the books of our railways, and the figures of street railroad transportation, frankly open to any reasonable inquiry.

The Shore Line Electric Railway Company.

The Company Pleads for a Fare Increase

1918

THE END OF TROLLEY SERVICE:

Again from the Shoreliner, October, 1949, Page 8:

"In 1919 the Shore Line employees went on strike. The post-World War I inflation was pressing hard upon them, but the company, already deep in debt and no longer able to count on the paternal support of Morton F. Plant, could not meet their demands."

"For a few hectic weeks the cars were operated by strike-breakers while the disgruntled strikers busily derailed them and otherwise hindered operations. Finally, the system went into receivership in 1919 owing the Plant estate \$231,000 and the Connecticut Company \$370,216.72. Piece by piece the great Shore Line Electric Railway was broken up and sold for scrap."

"In 1923 the newly incorporated New Haven & Shore Line Railway bought the tracks between New Haven and Saybrook in a last attempt to operate trolleys along the shore. Using lighter cars they were moderately successful, but the natural disadvantages of the trolley were a constant stumbling block. The number of cars they could run at one time was limited, and when the population shifted about, as it has a tendency to do, the tracks didn't shift with it."

Besides, trolleys were not so fast as was popularly supposed; buses can and do run faster. In 1923 buses took over between Saybrook and Guilford and, on January 1, 1930, the same fate befell the last cars between Guilford and New Haven. The Shore Line Trolley became a thing of the past."

"Mr. John Dwyer of Church Street, North Branford, was a motor-man on one of the last trolleys to run through North Branford and one of the drivers of the first buses that replaced the trolley. He

remembers best running the snow-plow for the trolley in the winter of 1929."

"Impractical though they might have been, a hazard to life and limb and horse-drawn vehicles, the trolley never-the-less, marked an era in the development of the shore line. We shall not see their like again."

by
Edna G. Hall

About the Author:

Born on August 30, 1918, Edna Griswold Hall was a life-long resident of North Branford. As a long-time member of the Totoket Historical Society she prepared several research monographs similar to this history of the Shore Line Electric Railway. She was also active in developing programs and displays for the Society. Mrs. Hall died on April 29, 1992.

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- Personal interviews with:
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 - Mrs. Floyd Griswold
 - Mr. Burton S. Hall
 - Mr John Dwyer

Editor's Note:

The original of this monograph and prints of the photos are in the collection of the Totoket Historical Society. The original text is a faded, undated typescript prepared around 1975. It has been retyped in a computerized format for this publication. A few obvious typographical errors were corrected. The original title has been expanded to include the trolley wreck which was always in the text.