

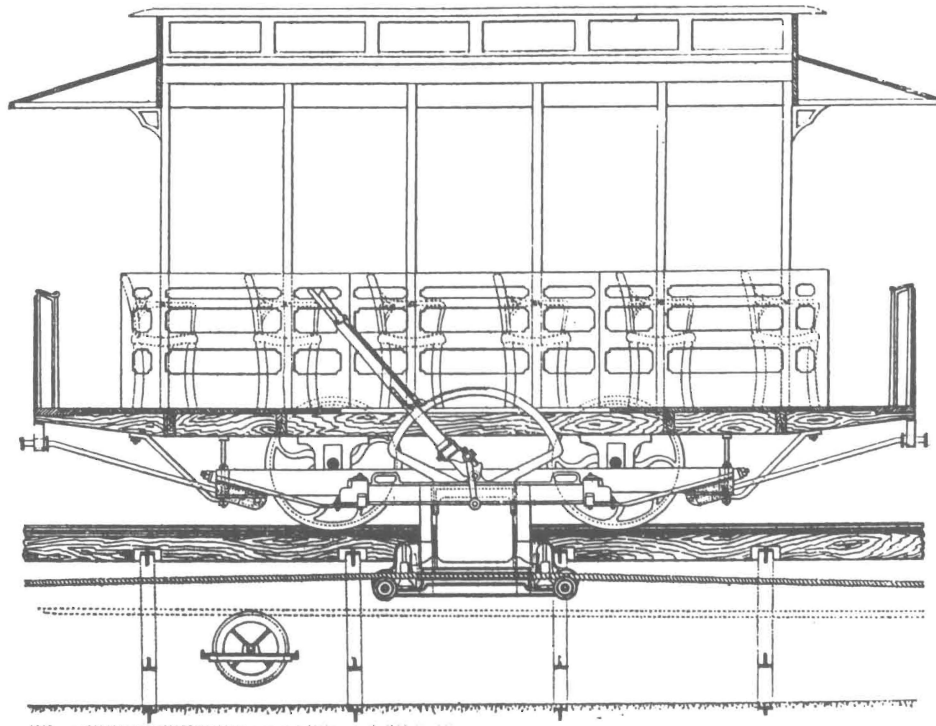
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On Cable Cars and Lunch Rooms EARLY STREETCARS IN HYDE PARK

Stephen A. Treffman
Contributing Editor

The articles that appeared in the Spring and Summer, 1997 issues of Hyde Park History on an earlier occupant of the building in which the Hyde Park Historical Society's headquarters are now housed continue to attract attention. As you may remember, Alta Blakely reported on "Steve's Lunch," a small restaurant run by Greek immigrant Steve Megales that occupied these premises beginning around, it was thought, 1948. A very interesting letter has recently arrived that provides insights into an even earlier period in the history of the building.

The letter, which appears on page 10, is from the granddaughters of Turney Keller, the man who, they report, converted what was a cable car waiting room

into other uses. Mary Belle Keller Johnson and Judy Keller Levatino tell us that, from as early as 1898 until 1952, the building was operated as a short order restaurant by the Keller family. Prior to 1898, they say, the building was used as a warming room for "trolley personnel." When placed within the context of the development of Hyde Park's public transportation systems, this new information adds greatly to our knowledge of the history and uses of our building.

CHICAGO STREET TRANSPORTATION ORIGINS

In the early years of Chicago's history, travel about the city's streets was accomplished on foot, by horseback or by horse and carriage. The latter could be hired with driver by the day or by the mile in cabs called hackneys or hacks. Omnibuses, large horse- ➤ 2

◀❶ drawn enclosed wagons with seating for multiple passengers, first appeared on Chicago streets on regular schedules in 1850. The introduction of street rail transportation in the city, however, began nearly 141 years ago when a horse drawn car line began operations on April 25, 1859. It was built by the privately owned Chicago City Railway Company (CCR), which had been awarded the city's franchise for the South Side of the city. Two other companies held franchises for the city's north and west sides. The CCR cars ran on rails along State Street from Madison Street to 12th Street (now Roosevelt Road). In the months following, the company built an extension of the line first to 22nd Street (now Cermak Road), then eastward down 22nd Street to Cottage Grove Avenue and, finally, from Cottage Grove to 31st Street. The immediate goal of these extensions was to provide transportation to the Illinois State Fair, which, in the fall of 1859, was located on land along Cottage Grove. The major advantage of using rails (originally wooden beams wrapped in iron sheetmetal) for hauling wagons with passengers was that the rails provided smoother, more comfortable and faster transportation than could be obtained from wheels rolling over the irregular unpaved roads of the time. Basic street car fares of a nickel a ride were set by city ordinance in 1859 and kept at that same level until 1919.

The demands and opportunities of population growth and commercial and industrial development in the city and its suburbs encouraged expansion of the CCR. The increase in the number of cars, horses and track owned and maintained by the CCR grew exponentially, as did ridership. In 1859, for example, the company consisted of only four cars and twenty-five horses operating at twelve minute intervals on about three miles of track and carried many tens of thousands of passengers a year. Annual ridership rose to 3.5 million only three years later. By 1867 the CCR owned fifty-three cars and 375 horses, employed 198 men and operated over 12.5 miles of track. The number of passengers that year totaled more than five million. Six years later, in 1873, the CCR was running seventy-five cars and 600 horses operating at four minute intervals on twenty-three miles of track and was transporting at least six million riders a year. Only seven years later, at the end of 1880, the system had more than doubled in size to 46.679 single track miles traversed by a fleet of 292 cars and 1,468 horses. In short, in that twenty year period, from 1859 to 1880, the company experienced growth that involved 15.6 times more track, 58.7 times more horses, and 73 times more cars carrying many millions of passengers annually!

As the CCR expanded the length of its horse car lines to meet demand, problems of keeping its system coordinated and its costs under control grew apace.

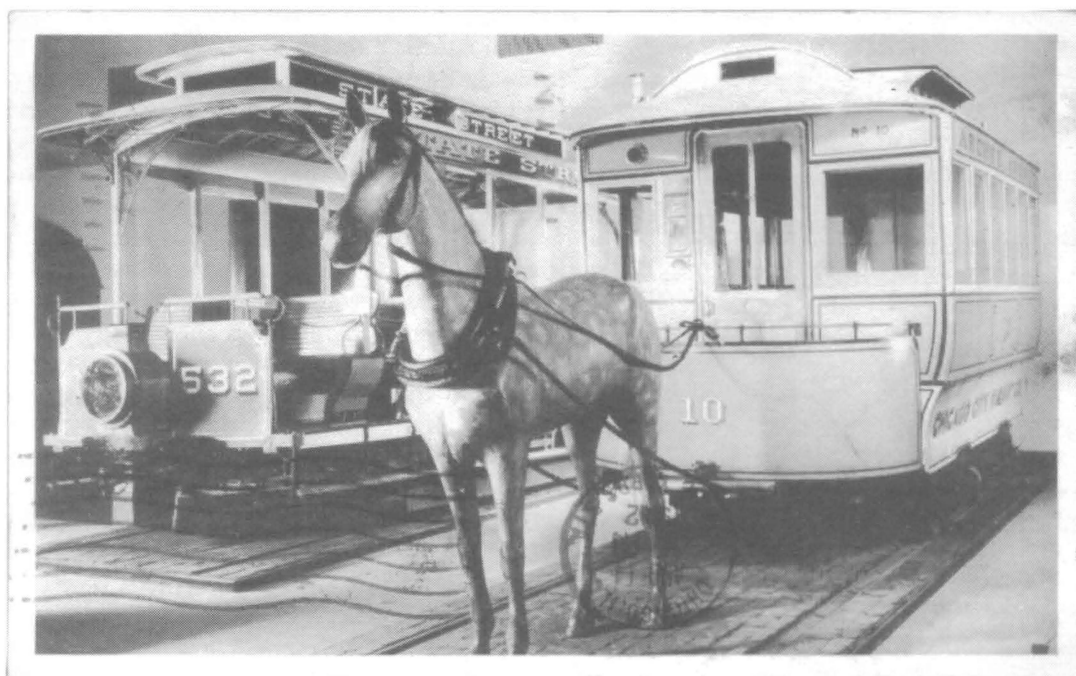
The cars and rails, once installed, had long lives and were relatively inexpensive to keep up. Aside from the investment in manpower and supervision, the key variable in the cost of operating the system was the care and feeding of the horses. Although perhaps one or two horses might draw one car, they could only work four or five hours a day. This meant that shifts of fresh horses had to be kept on hand for each horsecar in order to maintain a twelve or sixteen hour a day schedule. An entire system of men and equipment had to be developed around simply sustaining the horses. Moreover, the horse was relatively slow, not always reliable, susceptible to disease, and, glaringly apparent to one and all, associated with a "residue" on the streets that raised public health concerns. One horse could produce as much as twenty-two pounds of manure a day. Its required disposal, in fact, actually became an ancillary business undertaking. All in all, then, there were problems associated with a large-scale system of horse drawn passenger cars that were well recognized fairly early. This didn't mean that the CCR stopped building horse lines, only that its management was open to the idea of finding alternative forms of power to pull its cars. As it happened, Hyde Park would become the focus of the CCR's attention.

HYDE PARK AND ITS STRETCARS

There is more to the early history of streetcars in Hyde Park than cable cars. After the Civil War, the city's horse car lines began to look beyond Chicago's borders for their growth. On March 5, 1867, the Chicago and Calumet Horse and Dummy Railroad Company (CCHDRC), an affiliate of the CCR, was incorporated under Illinois law to establish street rail lines for "cars drawn by horses or cars with engines attached, commonly called dummy engines, for the carrying of passengers." Its focus of service was to be the area of Cook County south of the city's border at 39th Street and east of State Street, in short, virtually the entire area of the Village of Hyde Park. A year later, in 1868, the Board of Supervisors for the Village of Hyde Park authorized this new CCR affiliate to lay tracks from 39th Street extending south from the CCR's preexisting tracks in Chicago proper. Implementing this resolution launched the robust expansion of the CCR in succeeding decades.

HORSE DRAWN CARS

Hyde Park's streetcar system apparently went through two phases prior to the introduction of the cable cars. The first of these, an unexpected finding, was that horse drawn streetcars seem to have run on rails down 55th Street in Hyde Park. A map that dates from that period (Wright: 1870) specifically identifies a horse car line running down Cottage



OLD STREET CARS

Horse and Cable Cars at the Museum of Science and Industry, postcard view c.1942 (publisher unknown). Believed to be, at least in part, replicas, probably built for the 1933 Century of Progress, these are on permanent display at the museum.

Grove from 39th Street and then swinging around to 55th Street east to what is now Lake Park Avenue. This is, however, the only then contemporary source found so far that suggests that a horse-drawn streetcar rail line ever existed along 55th Street. This line would have been part of the expansion arising from that 1868 authorizing resolution. The CCR built tracks in Chicago further south primarily along State Street and Cottage Grove Avenue to then unstated terminal points. In ensuing years, lines were built on other streets both east and west of Cottage Grove with 47th and 63rd Streets becoming the major east/west routes to southwest Chicago. All of these new CCR streetcar lines were powered solely by horses. Thus was established the early outlines of the course public transportation would ultimately take on the South Side of Chicago.

THE STEAM DUMMY

The reference to steam driven rail cars on city streets in the CCHDRC incorporation papers indicate that replacing horse drawn street cars with an alternative system of motive power was already a possibility in the minds of the CCR's management at least as early as 1867. The usefulness of steam driven technology in manufacturing and, especially, in interurban rail transport was already well established throughout the country. In fact, a steam driven streetcar is said to have operated along Broadway on Chicago's north side as early as 1864. At some point after 1867 the CCR and its affiliate decided to introduce them in their system, not in the city itself

but in and around Hyde Park. Assuming that a horse drawn line initially ran along Cottage and down 55th Street, this steam dummy would have been the second phase in the development of public streetcar transportation in the community.

While there is no question that steam driven streetcars chugged down Cottage Grove and 55th Street, there remains much that is unclear about their actual history. No picture of one, for example, has yet surfaced. The Hyde Park-Kenwood National Bank published a booklet in 1929 with a photograph purportedly that of Hyde Park's steam dummy. Research, however, has revealed that the photograph is actually of an engine from an entirely different Chicago streetcar company. While the exact dimensions of the Cottage Grove/Hyde Park steam dummy are not known, information about similar vehicles from that period suggests what the one used in Hyde Park probably was like.

Commonly, to minimize terrorizing horses along the street, these small locomotives were built within frames that resembled a shortened version of a regular horse drawn trailer. The car would have run on four wheels with probably no more than seven feet from the middle of the front wheels to the middle of the ones in the rear. Likely, it was operated by a two-cycle engine powered by steam from a vertical boiler heated by burning anthracite coal or coke to minimize smoke and soot. The engine carriage was designed ostensibly to muffle the noise of escaping steam and engine operation by means of shielding and roof top steam condensers. It was this latter characteristic, the

◀ ③ reduction of noise, as well as the horse car appearance, that provided the underlying meaning to the name “dummy engine,” that is, silent or “dumb,” as in “unable to speak.” These small locomotives pulled no more than one or two passenger trailers along the three miles of stronger steel track installed on Cottage Grove from 39th Street to 55th Street and east to Lake Park Avenue. When not in use, these engines and their trailers were probably stored in a car barn at 38th Street and Cottage, adjacent to the stables where the horses were kept. It is not known how many steam dummies operated on the Hyde Park line nor how their return runs were accomplished, that is, by reversing gears or being turned on a platform.

Also in question is the date when steam dummies were actually introduced into Hyde Park. Block (1977) offers the date of 1869 for that event and cites as her source Pierce (1940). Pierce, in turn, makes reference only to the governing legal authorizations and to Weber (1936). Weber, however, fudges on the date by noting those 1868 actions by the Village Board permitting the building of street rails in Hyde Park but not when the actual construction took place. As was earlier suggested, operating on that Cottage Grove/55th Street line in 1869 may have been a horse line rather than a steam dummy, two very different forms of power. At another extreme is a photograph from a 1943 collection at the Chicago Historical

Society with a caption stating that a steam driven street car began running in Hyde Park in 1881. Indeed, a map dated 1881 in Bluestone (1991) clearly denotes a steam line running down Cottage Grove and turning east at 55th Street to Lake Park but this does not preclude the possibility that steam dummies were running there before 1881. Moreover, this would have been precisely the time that CCR officials were already planning to replace horse cars and steam dummies with cable cars. A more persuasive date emerges from an unpublished street transportation chronology developed in 1933 now in the collection of the Chicago Transit Authority. It places the introduction of the Hyde Park steam dummy in the year 1874. This date seems in reasonable accord with the state of Hyde Park’s development and the known history of the CCR. It would also fit with the presumption that a horse car line preceded the steam dummy in time. Uncovering more substantial corroborating information in support of any one of these dates remains a challenge.

Usually overlooked in the few references to this steam car is that of the almost 46 miles of Chicago City Railway Company track existing in 1881, only those three miles of track along Cottage and 55th, the Hyde Park line, were used for steam driven streetcars. These steam dummies may have been an attempt by the CCR to compete directly with the Illinois

CHICAGO CITY RAILWAY COTTAGE GROVE LINE CABLE CAR AND TRAILERS

View is on Wabash Avenue during a summer day.

The trailers were originally horse drawn cars.

During the winter, closed cars with small
stoves for heat were used to carry
passengers.





Central's steam locomotives that ran along the lake. The one-way nickel fare for a streetcar ride was half that for a commute downtown from 55th Street on the Illinois Central but it was a much slower trip. In addition, these engines may have been considered somewhat more fitting, modern and substantial for the prestigious community they served. Hyde Park's Trustees, recognizing the mess that accompanied horse drawn streetcars, may even have insisted on steam power. It was also on this portion of the line that the streets were paved with granite to support the heavier rails and engines required by the steam dummy. As a result, these were among the better-paved roads in the city and its suburbs.

Unfortunately, street locomotives produced a good deal more noise than advertised, frightening horses and annoying pedestrians. Worse, for a variety of reasons, street car companies found that these steam dummy cars proved to be no less expensive to operate than had been the horse cars. CCR managers were spurred to look at another alternative, one being developed in California. The days of the Hyde Park steam dummy engines were numbered. The last one to run its route did so early in 1887.

THE CABLE CAR

In the early 1870s Andrew S. Halladie, a wire manufacturer in California, developed a system wherein passenger cars ran up and down the hilly streets of downtown San Francisco on rails by means of a moving cable buried under the streets. It began operations in 1873 and its success spurred further

expansion there throughout the '70s. Chicago City Railway officers, alerted to that success, traveled to San Francisco in 1880 to study its cable system. Realizing that if a system like that could operate on such variable terrain, it would probably work especially well upon the gentler topography of Chicago. They returned home and Charles B. Holmes, CCR's president, quickly obtained approval of the company's board and Chicago's city council to begin establishing cable car transport along many of the same Chicago streets on which they had run their horse cars.

Construction began in June, 1881 and by January, 1882, the CCR formally introduced cable cars into Chicago's public transportation system, the second such system in the United States. The first trains, usually consisting of a grip car and one or two trailers, ran on the State Street line; a second line was established on Wabash Avenue. These downtown cable cars traveled over a turnaround that went from State Street to Wabash Avenue via Lake Street and Madison Street, a layout that Hilton (1954) and others have insisted first gave the "Loop" its name not, as is often assumed, the elevated train loop which came later.

The Wabash/Cottage Grove horse car line was converted in 1882 to cable car use from Madison Street to 39th Street. In 1887, the Cottage Grove line was extended from 39th to 67th Street and 55th Street was converted to cable use. In 1890, after the annexation of Hyde Park, the Cottage Grove cable car system was extended south to 71st Street, the



◀⑤ south entrance to Oakwoods Cemetery and the edge of the Grand Crossing district. Cable cars proved less expensive to run than horse or steam power, were more acceptable to the public and apparently made money for the company. As a result, cable lines were built elsewhere in Chicago by the city's two other major street railway companies. Indeed, these companies eventually created the largest cable car system in the United States with thirty-four cable lines, 710 grip cars and 82 miles of double track and passenger traffic that peaked at 237 million riders in 1892. Moreover, the successful expansion of Chicago's cable lines during the 1880s spurred the development of cable systems in most other large American cities.

Winter weather had always been a challenge to Chicago's streetcars but purportedly cable cars proved adept in meeting it. The steam cars may have been more effective than horse drawn cars during the winter due to their weight. Cable cars, however, were said to be even more successful in the face of ice and snow. Installed at a depth of four feet below street level (a foot deeper than the ones in San Francisco) so that they resisted freezing, the cables ran within an iron and concrete enclosure with openings at the bottom that allowed water and snow to escape into a trough below ground. Travel on these cars during the winter, however, was rugged particularly for the conductor, who stood exposed to the elements. Although there were winter enclosures installed on the trailers and various kinds of stoves introduced to heat the cars, passengers were encouraged to wear heavy outerwear. Straw was scattered on floors to insulate passenger's feet from the cold floorboards. While one may have been able to make a trip on the only lightly insulated grip car or the enclosed trailers from Lake Park to downtown Chicago in perhaps sixty minutes, during Chicago's bitter winters, the experience itself must have seemed a good deal longer for all on board. The same ride on a horse drawn car, however, would have taken perhaps three times as long. For many the cable car was viewed as a marvelous improvement.

THE 55TH STREET CABLE CAR LINE

The driving technology of a cable car system consisted of a stationary building in which steam boilers powered iron wheels or pulleys around which ran an "endless" cable installed underground along city streets upon which cars moved. The Hyde Park powerhouse, constructed in 1887, was located on the north east corner of Cottage Grove Avenue and 55th Street, land on which The University of Chicago's Friend Family Health Care Clinic now stands. It operated both the 39th/Cottage Grove and the 55th Street lines and later the cable to 71st Street. Two Babcock and Williams' steam engines powered by three low grade coal burning boilers turned two

upright pulleys, twenty-five feet in diameter, around which the cable flowed. As the cables came off these vertical pulleys they were wound around a smaller horizontal pulley that moved the cables under the street. The cars that actually were in touch with the cable were termed grip cars because it was by means of a device managed by the conductor that either grabbed onto or released the cable. Grip the cable, the car moved with the cable; release the grip and apply the brake, and the car came to a halt.

Cable cars traveled at three times the speed of the old horse drawn cars. Since there was no gradual build-up to speed, every time the grip was applied riders would have experienced a sharp jolt against the hard wooden seats as the grip grabbed onto the moving line beneath the street.

The CCR grip cars were four wheeled, sixteen to nineteen feet long, ten feet four inches high, wooden vehicles with seating for twenty passengers and the grip operator. Each grip car could pull up to three trailers, each with seating for forty passengers and a train man. The signage on the 55th Street cable grips identified them as the "Hyde Park" line. The cars followed an unusual route. From Cottage Grove, they glided east at about twelve miles per hour straight down 55th Street to what is now Harper Avenue. There they began a six miles per hour counter clockwise circuit turning south to a half block past 56th Street where they traveled east, through what is now private housing, to Lake Park Avenue. Turning north on Lake Park and passing what is now our headquarters, the cars then curved around the corner to move west again on 55th Street to Cottage Grove. At the end of the workday, the grips and trailers would be housed at a car barn at 38th Street and Cottage Grove.

The Hyde Park turnaround, which ran on a separate cable 3,868 feet long, was called Cable Court, although the name usually was applied specifically to that section between Harper and Lake Park between 56th and 57th Streets. The cable itself was moved by means of power transferred from the longer 55th street cable through speed reduction gears located underground on Harper Avenue. A major reason for building the Cable Court loop was probably to allow a convenient connection for commuters with the Illinois Central's South Park Station which was located on the east side of Lake Park immediately north of 57th Street. It may also have served to protect the cable by reducing problems in turning the grip cars. There is also a possibility that some form of this loop may have been in existence at the time of the steam dummy.

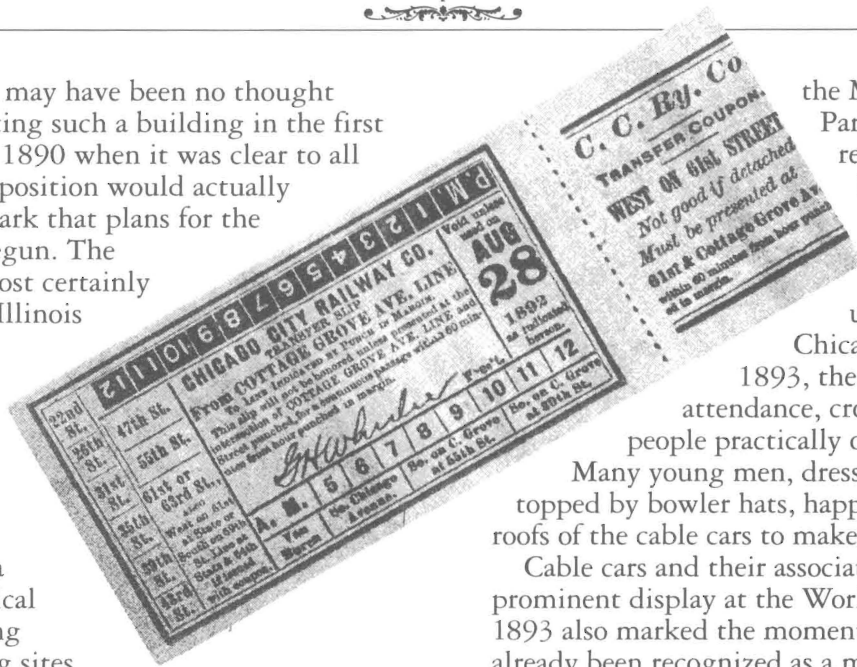
The Cable Court loop, it should be emphasized, was in place before our building was built, perhaps by as many as five or six years. Various maps from 1888 and 1890 clearly display the cable loop but none show the

building. In fact, there may have been no thought even given to constructing such a building in the first place. It was only after 1890 when it was clear to all that the Columbian Exposition would actually take place in Jackson Park that plans for the building likely were begun. The building itself was almost certainly built, probably by the Illinois Central Railroad itself, during the year prior to the Fair, that is, 1892-93, when the embankment and viaducts elevating the railroad's tracks were being constructed. As a result there was a physical separation of the waiting rooms and ticket selling sites for IC commuters and cable car passengers. The great old 12th Street IC depot, now demolished, was built at the same time and the red brick and stone used in its construction may have been similar to that used in building our headquarters. The main point here is simply that the cable loop was not a result of the opening of the Fair, but the building itself was.

Probably the most vulnerable point in the cable car system was the cable itself. The CCR cable consisted of a hemp core, surrounded by 96 steel wires wound into six strands of 16 wires each. The 1 1/4-inch thick line, however, was subject to wear and breakage from use, age or accident. For example, the approximate life of the 10,856 feet long cable line along 55th Street was 167 days. If the grip were applied incorrectly it could slice or dangerously damage the cable. When a major problem developed in one segment of the cable, the entire system of which it was a part ground to an abrupt halt while repairs were made. Cables were fixed by splices made on site or replaced entirely by splicing a new line into the existing line, running it completely through the entire system and then splicing together the two ends of the new line.

The impact of the cable car line on the economy of Hyde Park was immediate. The *Economist* (Chicago) for December 8, 1888 reported: "The development for business purposes of Fifty-Fifth Street...has been largely due to the cable car line... The prices for property on Fifty-Fifth have risen from \$50 to \$100 a foot, and over twenty stores are in process of erection on the street." The street's commercial past was set for the next sixty-five years.

During the World's Columbian Exposition in 1893, cable cars were a major source of transportation for millions of visitors. Cable cars offered close access to the Fair's entrances at 57th Street and, on Cottage, at



the Midway. The Hyde Park/55th Street line was renamed the "Jackson Park." The extended length of the Cable Court loop proved a boon in loading and unloading passengers. On Chicago Day, October 9, 1893, the day of the Fair's highest attendance, crowds of some 500,000 people practically overwhelmed the system.

Many young men, dressed in suits, their heads topped by bowler hats, happily climbed up on the roofs of the cable cars to make the trip to Jackson Park.

Cable cars and their associated equipment were on prominent display at the World's Fair but the year 1893 also marked the moment when electricity had already been recognized as a more efficient and flexible form of power for street railways. Despite appearances, cable was on its way out. The initial introduction of electricity to power Chicago's streetcars in 1893 led to a progressive dismantling of the cable car system that finally ended in 1906. The 55th Street/Jackson Park cable line was among the last to go having served the community for nearly twenty years. Overhead electric lines were installed and the cables and gears were removed. The cable car era ended and the era of the trolley car line began in Hyde Park. (The "trolley" is the pulley attached to the pole that touches and rolls along the electric wire strung above the street.) Cable Court kept its name and electric streetcars and trolley buses followed its loop well into the present century. It finally was dismantled during the urban renewal era.

It should be noted that the emergence of each succeeding street rail technology did not immediately preclude the existence of the ones preceding. By 1892, for instance, the year before the Fair, the CCR had 2,611 horses, almost double the number it had in 1880. Only one-third of the CCR revenues, however, was derived from the horse car lines, the remainder coming largely from its cable operations. Electric lines, as well, were just being introduced. By 1895, Chicago's streets, particularly in the downtown area, were filled with a melange of streetcars, some powered by horses, others by cables, and still others by electricity. Steam also powered trains on the suburban commuter lines and, for several years during the mid-1890s, the city's elevated rail lines. This mixture was finally resolved in favor of electricity as the predominant power source for streetcars by 1906 and the Illinois Central commuter line, by 1926.

Horses, moreover, remained a factor on Chicago's streets. There were an estimated 120,000 horses in Chicago in 1895. Though fading rapidly from use after the turn of the century as power for city

◀ 7 streetcars and fire engines, they remained important in the city's private transportation system well into the present century for recreational use and for hauling delivery wagons. Some of our readers may still remember the horse drawn wagons in Hyde Park that delivered ice and fresh vegetables to people's homes. A painting at our headquarters portrays an old horse drawn milk wagon that once operated in Hyde Park. The wagon stood abandoned for many years east of the IC tracks at 57th Street.

IN CLOSING

While the street cable car today is often viewed merely as a quaint relic of the past, the stuff of charm bracelets, toys, advertising gimmicks and assorted other memorabilia usually associated with San Francisco, it has a quite legitimate and notable role in American, Chicago and, certainly, Hyde Park history. The story of the cable car in Chicago is most obviously tied to the evolution of public transportation and residential, industrial and commercial development in the city, in general, and to Hyde Park and its nearby suburban neighbors, in particular, both before and after annexation. Moreover, it provided the public access to the South Park system and may well have been a factor in establishing some of its boundaries. In essence, the horse-drawn and later the cable car performed the same function for these areas that the Illinois Central Railroad commuter line had played initially in the emergence of Hyde Park. Indeed, together the two spurred the growth of Hyde Park and the South Side generally throughout that century and beyond.

Chicago has often been referred to as a city of neighborhoods. In earlier periods in Chicago's history, one of the things that helped define those neighborhoods was the streetcar lines. The unintended effect, however, was, to a certain degree, their influence on the emergence and reinforcement of artificial social, ethnic and racial boundaries. The "other" side of the tracks was given a new, big city twist that could evoke social conflict, at times bitter or even violent. On the other hand, the elaboration of the public transportation system opened up to Chicagoans new opportunities not only for better physical mobility but also for enhanced residential, investment, employment and recreational choices as well.

The extension of public street and rail transportation in and around Hyde Park had an impact on the question of the annexation of Hyde Park to Chicago. It had the effect of drawing Hyde Park and its population closer to Chicago, both in a temporal and economic sense, while at the same time enabling the emergence of multiple centers of political, social and economic interests outside of

Hyde Park Center. Each new line established, each new set of tracks laid, was yet another direct link between the city and villagers of Greater Hyde Park.

The political power that had been wielded by the pioneers in Hyde Park Center (who opposed annexation) was diluted in the face of population increases and the emergence of new and powerful economic and political interests elsewhere in the suburb. As a result, annexation proponents would claim that the old style of governance was outmoded and simply inadequate to the new situation. One may also speculate that the concentration of more advanced street transport in the northern section of Hyde Park contributed to a sense of deprivation expressed by citizens in the southern portions of the village. It is no surprise that when the annexation question was put to the voters of Hyde Park Village in 1887 and 1889, the voting majority that decided the issue in favor of annexation came largely from the wards outside the old center of Hyde Park.

The cable car waiting room on Lake Park apparently directly served the transit system for less than a decade, perhaps as few as five years, if our correspondents' date for its conversion into a lunch room, 1898, is correct. The months of the Fair, then, would have been the peak period of its connections to the cable cars. In that sense, the building is a genuine artifact of both the Columbian Exposition and of the Cable Car era.

The building was located near the Illinois Central stops at 55th and 57th Streets, the Cable Court streetcars and the hotels and small shops along Lake Park and 55th and 57th Streets, all of which generated considerable sidewalk traffic. This location provided the logic for its more than half-century of existence as a lunch room. It became a working man's cafe that served large portions to customers at a reasonable price. The demise of the building's use as a lunch room probably was as much a function of residential and commercial changes occurring in Hyde Park as it was sheer obsolescence of the facility as an eatery. Ownership of the building remained with the Illinois Central Railroad until it was sold to our Society in 1977.

There is something wonderfully resonant, perhaps even ironic, that this working man's building has become the home of an historical society for a community driven by issues and conflicts generated both by elitist aspirations and social diversity. This same transaction, however, has practical consequences in the present as our Society seeks to respond effectively to the reality and complexity of our community's history.

Finally, assembly lines were offshoots of cable car technology as are ski lifts. A less obvious connection can be drawn between cable cars and another then-

contemporaneous technological development: the elevator. They had similar components such as cables, pulleys, gears, and rails and, originally, both were run by steam powered engines. The cable car operated horizontally while the elevator ran vertically. Although cable driven street cars disappeared as a major urban transportation system, the related technology embodied by the elevator continued to power and be shaped by the emergence of new techniques for the construction of taller buildings for offices, commerce and residential living. The skyscraper, in general, and, particularly in Hyde Park, the large apartment hotel, were two of its results...but that is another story. ☺

Steve Treffman is our Society's archivist and is preparing another exhibition on Hyde Park's hotels for display at our headquarters later this year.

Thanks to the staff from the Chicago Transit Authority for its assistance.

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**LUNCH ROOM AT
5529 S. LAKE PARK AVE.
C. 1935**

*From Keller Family
Collection*

The triangular shaped window on the left may originally have served as a booth for selling tickets to cable car riders during the World's Columbian Exposition. On the right is a wooden box, which held coal during the winter for use in a pot-bellied stove that warmed the building. A Coca-Cola sign may be seen on the wall at the right side of the photograph. Now the headquarters of the Hyde Park Historical Society.

Letter to the Editor

To Whom It May Concern:

In 1898, our grandfather, Turney Keller, opened the "Lunchroom" at 5529 Lake Avenue, which is now the Hyde Park Historical Society. (Ed. note: Lake Avenue was renamed Lake Park Avenue on April 14, 1913.) With the help of his two sons, Hosey (Harvey) and Charles Keller, the restaurant was continuously in operation until 1952. (Ed. note: One of the interviewees for the earlier articles thought that the restaurant had changed hands in 1948.)

Our grandfather with the help of his sons, leased the building for the entire time. We have no idea how much money was involved. He did have an accident on a trolley losing one arm, not two legs. (Ed. note: One of our correspondents in our earlier article had speculated that the IC had leased the building to Mr. Keller at no cost because he had lost two legs in a railroad accident.)

Before 1898, the building was used as a warming house for trolley personnel. The men gathered around the old pot belly stove and, we're sure, told some great stories. The notion that some food could be served came to our grandfather in 1898.

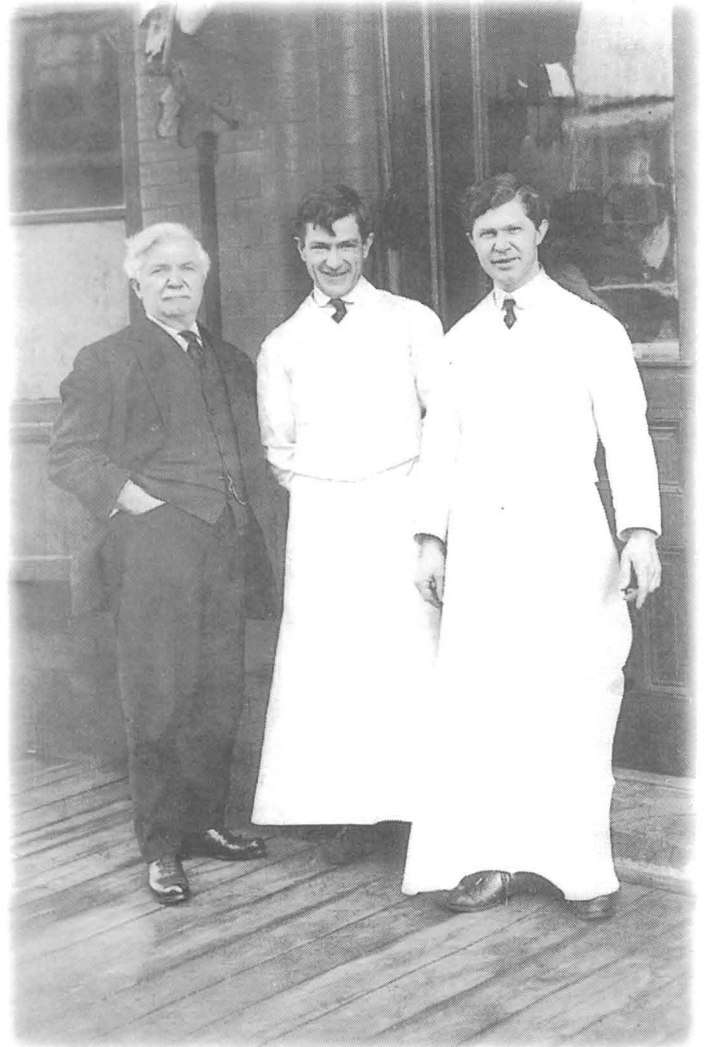
When our grandfather died in 1922, the boys, known as the Keller Brothers, took over the "Lunchroom." Their wives, Louetta and Marsha, also worked in the restaurant.

At the crack of dawn, breakfast was served. We can still remember the many aromas of home cooking. Bacon and eggs and oatmeal in the morning and if you looked at the wall one could see the specials for lunch, such as vegetable soup and meat loaf. There were no printed menus. The clientele was an integrated mixture of working males in Hyde Park. The counter was in two sections seating about twelve.

Our families spent many long hours making the "Lunchroom" very successful. The information above is correct according to documented papers from this time period. We have included various pictures for a visual remembrance of the times.

Sincerely,
Mary Bell Keller Johnson and Judy Keller Levantino

Ms. Johnson, the daughter of Harvey Keller, in a phone interview, told us that the lunch room was closed evenings and on Sundays. She herself was born at her family's residence on the 54th block of Harper Avenue. Turney's family was Christian Scientist and probably was a member of the 10th Church of Christ Scientist at 57th and Blackstone, now the vacant St. Stephen's Church. Ms. Levantino, her cousin, is the daughter of Charles Keller. —S.A.T.



**PROPRIETORS OF THE "LUNCH ROOM"
AT 5529 S. LAKE PARK AVENUE**

Postcard view c.1915 from the Keller family collection. From left: Turney Keller and his two sons Charles, and Hosey (Harvey), the eldest of the two. Note the wooden plank sidewalk in front of the building. Turney lost his left arm in a trolley accident. Members of the family are buried in Oakwoods Cemetery.

We Remember Jim Stronks

Jim Stronks was one of the Society's most generous historian-writers. His contributions to Hyde Park History were outstanding—articles dealing with subjects as diverse as Shipwrecks off Hyde Park and Alonzo Stagg—as well as those mentioned below. It was Jim who suggested the name Hyde Park History for our publication. "That's what it's about," he said. The remembrance below was written by his long time friend and colleague Mary Sidney.

James B. Stronks died on September 4, 1999 in Iowa City. He had moved from Chicago to his hometown after learning he had leukemia. Readers of the Society's Newsletter will recall Jim as the author of lively, probing, researched articles about little known corners of Hyde Park/Chicago history: the building where William Jennings Bryan made his "Cross of Gold" speech, the Hyde Park Hotel where widowed Mary Lincoln spent a sad summer, and Camp Douglas where sick and dying Confederate soldiers were imprisoned. Jim loved history, especially of 19th century America. Absorbed in research, he was perhaps happiest studying old books, old letters, old maps, old newspapers, diaries, deeds, and wills, whatever. He had a microscopic knowledge of the Civil War.

Completing a PhD at the University of Chicago after Army service in World War II, Jim was for many years professor of American Literature at the University of Illinois in Chicago and the author of many articles and reviews. But he was also: a Hyde Parker, runner (in the 70s and 80s), hiker in the Alps and Yorkshire moors and elsewhere, biker in France and Italy, a museum and gallery patron,

CSO subscriber, movie goer, and dog enthusiast, faithfully attending the annual April kennel club show and the Run with Rover race in Lincoln Park.

He was a formidable teacher! Much praised and admired by serious students, feared and disliked by the lazy. Every minute was accounted for in his classrooms—no idle chit-chat, no dead time—every student paper was painstakingly corrected or commented upon; not an error escaped. His office at UIC was a wonder itself, almost painfully neat, not one book or well sharpened pencil out of place. And Jim himself: tall slender, upright, suit pressed, tie straight, shoes gleaming, spectacles shining, and on good days, blue eyes alive with a bit of whimsy or mischief.

Always busy in the retirement home in Iowa City, he led a film series, as a lark joined the Lions Club, biked into the Iowa countryside, became a bird watcher in spite of himself, poked about in small towns and country graveyards taking photographs, made friends with local dogs, and was always on the prowl for an interesting bit of overlooked history.

He was also a witty man, fond of (usually) amiable irony and satire. He'd call a friend long distance to share jokes he'd heard. True, he had eccentricities: he steadfastly opposed alleged improvements like answering machines, computers, and e-mail; until 1998 he typed all articles and correspondence on a beloved elderly upright manual Underwood until he could no longer buy parts for it.

We are very grateful to Mary Sidney for her thoughtful and evocative picture of Jim. We do deeply regret his early death and miss his generous participation in the Society's endeavors.

Notes From the Archives

Our appreciation to the following friends for their gifts to the Archives:

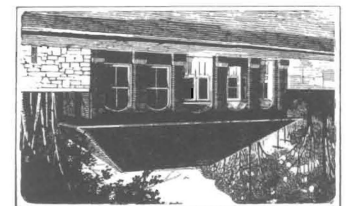
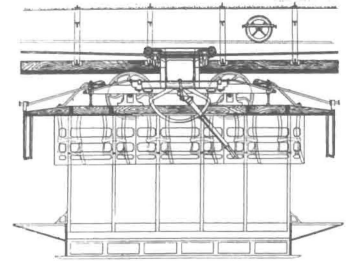
- **Nicholas Fulop**, Quadrangle Club director, for his gift of a copy of Emily Kadens, *The Quadrangle Club, 1893-1993: Creating a Sense of Society* (The Club: 1998).
- **Herbert Kalk**, for thirty-one original posters advertising the Hyde Park/57th Street Art Fair (all were on display at our headquarters in 1997 during the fair's fiftieth anniversary year celebration).
- **Tom Pavelec**, for his assistance in securing the above donation.
- **Berenice Boehm**, for her donation of the book *Souvenir of the World's Columbian Exposition* (Chicago, 1893).
- **Leon and Marian Despres**, for twenty-five Hyde Park related books, one a 1923 directory for much of the city and its suburbs listing the names of residents, their addresses, and the cars they drove.
- **Gayle Janowitz**, for two urban renewal related

maps, among other smaller items.

- **Sidney Williams, Jr.**, for, among other items, two chairs from Frank Lloyd Wright's Midway Gardens that once stood at 60th and Cottage Grove and a remarkable old medicine bottle from a pharmacy once located at 57th Street and Lake Park.
- **Harold Wolff**, for a major gift of some three hundred and twenty-five Hyde Park related books, magazines and notebooks of articles that he collected over a period of twenty-five years. His generosity has filled major gaps in our collection and expanded it dramatically.
- **Beth Wood**, for a photocopy of *White City Magazine*, Vol.2. No. 1 (May, 1906) which provides an early look at one of the great Chicago amusement parks that once stood at 63rd and Cottage Grove.

We also have received from Katherine Erickson the well-used passport of Ida de Pencier who died at the end of 1998 at the age of 102. Ida moved out of town to live near relatives last summer but before she left Chicago she took pains to inform the Society of her new mailing address. She was a very loyal supporter of our work and she will be missed.

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This Newsletter is published by the Hyde Park Historical Society, a not-for-profit organization founded in 1975 to record, preserve, and promote public interest in the history of Hyde Park. Its headquarters, located in an 1893 restored cable car station at 5529 South Lake Park Avenue, houses local exhibits. It is open to the public on Saturdays and Sundays from 2 until 4pm.

Telephone: **HY3-1893**

President.....**Alice Schlessinger**
Editor.....**Theresa McDermott**
Designer.....**Nickie Sage McDermott**

Regular membership: **\$15** per year,
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