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Old street car tracks here reminder of times gone by

(Editor's note: This is the 14th in a series of "then and now" articles on places and things of interest in Kansas City, Kan., compiled by area historian Magaret Landis in observance of the 100th birthday of KCK in 1986. Much of the information has appeared in past editions of the Kansan.)

Through the years, several kinds of public transportation have been offered in Kansas City, Kan.

The list includes the mule cars, cable cars, "dummy" engine trains, elevated railway (the "L" Road), electric street cars, diesel buses and the minion bus—"The Bus."

Vestiges of one of the most nostalgic of the various modes of public transportation—the street car—can be found throughout KCK in the form of street tracks poking through the worn asphalt.

The street car tracks and over-head electric power lines were on the principal thoroughfares and extended to the terminus of the line. On the north south streets, tracks were on: 3rd, 5th, 7th, 10th, 13th, and 18th streets. On the east-west streets: Quindaro, Parallel, Chelsea, Minnesota, Central, and Kansas Avenue. Others were Strong Avenue in Argentine, Southwest Boulevard in Rosedale, 39th Street and State Line.

Routes to Kansas City, Mo., were via Inter-city Viaduct, Central Avenue Viaduct, James Street Viaduct and 23rd Street viaduct.

When the street car reached the "end of the line," there were different means of turning them around for the return. Some used "turnarounds," some circled the block, others went around a loop and still others made the switch by way of "Ys."

A "car barn" was a place to keep the street cars when not in service; also, for maintenance. Car barns were located at 10th and Minnesota (northeast corner), 5th and Richmond (northeast corner) and just over the State Line from Rosedale at 29th and Southwest Boulevard.



The picture of a Rosedale street car (top) was taken in the early 1900s. John W. Davis (left) was the motorman and Herman C. Knox was the conductor. The photo was furnished by Mrs. Margaret (Davis) Jennings, daughter of John W. Davis. "The Bus" (bottom picture), Kansas city, Kan.'s transportation system consisting of a fleet of mini vans, was inaugurated February 1978.

Street cars at the beginning had a motorman and a conductor. Conductors collected fares from boarders at the rear of the street car. The newer street cars were equipped for a single operation, with the entrance and fare box at the front of the car.

On the feeder lines, smaller cars were used and were called "Dinky's." Other names for the smaller cars were "Puddle Jumpers" and "The Toonerville Trolley."

There were several interurban lines: Kansas City to Leavenworth, Rosedale to Merriam and Shawnee in Johnson County, Rosedale to Olathe and KCK to Bonner Springs.

During the mid -1930s, the motor buses became part of the public transportation scene. They became more prominent following World War II and replaced other street car lines.

By July 1957, buses has replaced all the street cars. The last trolley bus was retired from service Jan. 1, 1959, thus ending electric transit in the city.

Until 1978 the Area Transportation Authority, the "Metro," furnished all of the bus transportation for KCK. In February 1978, "The Bus," operated by KCK, put its first route into operation and today augments ATA service with several routes of its own.