



# Cincinnati Traction History Redesign

By Evan Greis

# Why Cincinnati Traction History?

I chose to do Cincinnati Traction History because I have used it in the past for many research projects as it is a good source of information for local history about streetcars and transportation in general.



# Home page

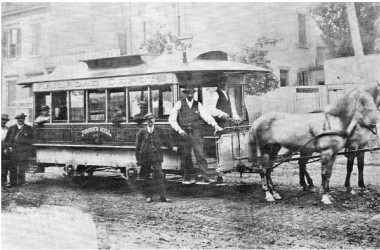
This section of the website is very simple HTML. Every subsection can be found by scrolling down on the main page. If you are looking for a specific railroad or section, you have to scroll through everything to find it. Each section could be divided into a dropdown menu with a title only where you can see what every subsection is. For example, information and links to the different streetcar parts could be in one dropdown menu.



# Text

Because there is little UI, every paragraph of information is a mountain of text across the entire screen. There are no borders or anything to make text stand out. No margins means the text is wall to wall almost making it an information overload.

General History of Cincinnati & Northern Kentucky Streetcars	
<p><b>Introduction</b></p> <p>The history of Cincinnati and northern Kentucky's transit systems illustrates how a city and its environs evolved over time as new transportation technologies were introduced, refined, and ultimately supplanted. By the 1850s, Cincinnati was the 6th largest city in the USA with a population of 115,000, just slightly beaten out by New Orleans, and not much smaller than Philadelphia, Boston, and Baltimore. Chicago was barely on the map at the time, and Cleveland and Columbus were little more than large towns with populations under 20,000. In the mid 19th century, Cincinnati's population was concentrated in today's downtown, Over-the-Rhine, and parts of the West End. The Mill Creek Valley was a sparsely settled area of small farms, orchards, and vineyards, as were many of the hilltop communities. With such a high number of people in an area of only a few square miles, the population density at the time was the highest in the country. Even Manhattan didn't surpass the population density of Cincinnati's core neighborhoods until 1900. The barriers of the Ohio River to the south, steep hillsides to the north and east, and the swampy, often flooded, Mill Creek Valley to the west prevented much outward development. Needless to say, it was so crowded that people were desperate to find a way to move into other areas.</p>	
<p><b>Horsecars and Early Companies</b></p> <p>The omnibus was the first attempt at any meaningful public transportation. It was, however, little more than a glorified stagecoach. Since most of the streets were just dirt, in anything but perfect conditions the omnibuses were so slow and unreliable that it was faster to just walk. It wasn't until steel rails were perfected in the late 1850s that the situation started to improve. With smooth rails, a carriage with steel wheels could be pulled by a team of horses or mules much more easily than the previous omnibuses. Starting on September 14, 1859, horsecar lines began to spread out from downtown to the east, west, and northwest. That first line was opened by the Cincinnati Street Railroad Company (not to be confused with the later Cincinnati Street Railway Company) from 4th and Walnut on a single-track loop to the West End and back to downtown. At the time, just about every horsecar line was operated by a separate company. Some of those companies were, along with the aforementioned Cincinnati Street Railroad Company, the City Passenger Railroad Company, the Passenger Railroad Company of Cincinnati, the Pendleton &amp; 5th Street Market Space Street Passenger Railroad Company, the Pendleton Street Railroad, and the Route Nine Street Railroad Company.</p>	
<p>The first horsecar line in Northern Kentucky, the Covington Street Railway Company, was incorporated in 1864 to build a line on Madison Avenue and across the new Suspension Bridge when it was completed. By the late 1870s horsecars stretched along Madison, Scott, 3rd, 4th, Main, and Pike in Covington, with a tangle of different tracks circling the blocks near the approach to the Suspension Bridge. These were split about evenly between the original Covington Street Railway and the South Covington &amp; Cincinnati Street Railway Company. The Newport Street Railway also began operations in 1867, with a large loop between the riverfront and 11th Street via York and Washington. These horsecars used the 4th Street bridge over the Licking River to access the Suspension Bridge to Cincinnati. A more direct connection to Cincinnati was made in the late 1870s with the opening of the Newport &amp; Cincinnati (L&amp;N) Bridge. The Newport and Dayton Street Railway also operated a line along Front and Fairfield from the L&amp;N Bridge east into Dayton. The early companies and operations of horsecar lines in Northern Kentucky were very similar to those in Cincinnati, with the added complexity of dealing with many different municipalities, county governments, bridge companies, and interstate commerce laws.</p>	
<p>In 1873 a handful of the Cincinnati lines were brought under control of the Cincinnati Consolidated Railway, though there were still several other companies operating. In 1879 new legislation attempted to define and standardize many of the operational procedures of the various companies. This specified responsibility for road maintenance, rules for operation, and performance requirements. The year 1880 also saw the birth of the Cincinnati Street Railway Company. The Cincinnati Consolidated Railway merged with a number of other lines, mostly on the west side of the city, into the new company. It was at this time that Cincinnati's peculiar rail gauge came into being as well. There was a great deal of apprehension about letting the steam railroads come into the central part of the city. The large locomotives with fast spinning wheels, pistons, steam vents, smoke, and loud noises would scare nearby horses, injuring and even killing people in the panic. With many new railroads coming into the city in the 1850s, the horsecar companies built their lines to a different gauge than the steam railroads. They generally used either 5'-2" or 5'-3" to fall between the standard gauge of 4'-8 1/2" most railroads used and the wide gauge 6'-0" tracks of the Ohio &amp; Mississippi and CH&amp;D (which used dual gauge tracks). Later in the 19th century as the various street railway companies consolidated, they standardized on a 5'-2 1/2" track gauge that could be used by the existing 5'-2" and 5'-3" equipment with little or no alterations.</p>	
<p>Even with the steel rails, the area's hills were still pretty much unscalable, since horses simply couldn't pull a loaded car up the slopes efficiently. Nevertheless, flat areas were opened up as much as possible. Horsecar lines extended along Eastern Avenue to Pendleton and north on Spring Grove Avenue through Cumminsville. There was a fairly extensive web of lines through downtown and the West End, as well as in Covington and Newport. Through the 1870s and 1880s the number of horsecar lines expanded into some of the hilltop communities like Mt. Auburn, Walnut Hills, and Price Hill, though service to those areas needed more than just horse power to make it viable for most commuters.</p>	
<p><b>Inclined Plane Railways</b></p> <p>The 1870s saw the construction of four of Cincinnati's five inclined plane railways. Using a steam engine (later converted to electric motors in some cases) and counterbalanced platforms on opposing inclined tracks, they allowed people, wagons, horses, and later electric streetcars and buses to climb the hillsides almost effortlessly. Upon reaching the top, where short-lived resorts and overlook buildings were constructed, people could walk to their homes or catch another horsecar line to traverse the relatively flat terrain on top of the hills. Nonetheless, it could still be a time-consuming journey, requiring transfers from horsecar to incline to another horsecar.</p>	



An early horsecar, also showing the muddy condition of the streets at the time.

# Menu

Because there is no menu on any page, one you are off the main page, it gets hard to navigate. The only way back to the main menu is either by manually going to the previous page or scrolling to the very bottom on some pages and clicking the Index link.

## Epilogue

For nearly 100 years, Cincinnati's growth outside the downtown hub was enabled by its street railway system. From slow horsecars to cable cars to inclines and electric streetcars and trolleys, there was an extensive network of relatively quiet, frequent, and well-patronized public transit. The cable cars and electrically powered streetcars and trolleys did not pollute the air where they ran, and they provided the framework for the city to grow outward. Every neighborhood within the city limits, except for Mt. Airy and Roselawn, had either streetcar or interurban service, and all of it is gone today. It's a risky proposition to dismantle a system which essentially built a whole city. Imagine what would happen if pedestrians were banned from downtown, or if automobiles were no longer allowed to operate in Indian Hill or Fairfield. It's no surprise then that many of our neighborhoods are dysfunctional today.

Road projects like Columbia Parkway diverted people away from important transit routes and opened up new areas to sprawling development. However, the construction of I-75, I-71, I-74, and the Norwood Lateral aggressively tore through already built-up neighborhoods. These roads demolished hundreds of buildings, displacing thousands of people, and they encouraged the development of new neighborhoods way out on the fringe, much farther out than anyone using a streetcar could imagine. Because of this, the city itself has lost significant population and tax revenue, and without any meaningful public transportation left, the whole region is choked with traffic while it doesn't have to be.

A new electric streetcar loop opened on September 9, 2016, running from 2nd Street at The Banks to Henry Street near the base of Bellevue Hill in Over-the-Rhine. It operates as a circulator similar to the early horsecar lines, allowing people to get around more quickly and supporting walkable urban neighborhood development. Despite some teething problems and city politicians who wanted to abandon it mid-construction, and who continue to do everything in their power to hobble the system, one hopes that it is but the first in a long line of better transit so that Cincinnati, and the whole region, can move forward to a better future.

Index

# Color

Other than the images, there is little color to the website. Everything is just black and white. There is no contrast between anything, making it harder to navigate.

Most of the information on Cincinnati's transit history is in books and journals which are inaccessible on the internet and are becoming rarer as time goes on. Wagner & Wright's *Cincinnati Streetcars* is an invaluable 10 volume collection that has numerous historical photographs, maps, diagrams, and general history. While some photos are distributed digitally, much of the historic information is not. Also, most of these volumes are out of print, and some can be rather difficult to find. The Cincinnati Historical Society Library in Union Terminal has all volumes, but they can't be checked out. Other information is in pamphlets and local history journals that never had much circulation outside of their home territory.

Information on the interurbans is spotty. George Hilton and John Due's *The Electric Interurban Railways in America* is the go-to reference for the interurban industry. It has been recently republished and is readily available. However, aside from what I have quoted in the information sections for each company, there isn't much else in that book about the specific interurbans in Cincinnati. Some books have been written on individual interurbans, however. David McVell self-published books on the Cincinnati Georgetown & Portsmouth, Cincinnati & Columbus, the Cincinnati & Lake Erie, and the Cincinnati Milford & Blanchester. Copies can be rather difficult to find, but they are excellent resources, containing maps, pictures, history, news events, and numerous business records (especially for the C&GP). Nothing of much substance has been written specifically about the Cincinnati Lawrenceburg & Aurora, the Cincinnati & Hamilton, or the three Interurban Railway & Terminal lines. The Electric Railway Journal, a trade publication from the time of streetcar and interurban building, sometimes wrote articles about new companies, especially if they used innovative new technologies. More and more of those are being digitized and shared, though the thousand-plus page volumes can be quite cumbersome to read through, and they mainly only cover the early construction and operations, or major efforts at economizing operations.

There is an excellent book about local railroads. *The Railroad and the City* by Carl Condit provides very useful information about the history of all Cincinnati's railroads, and how they've affected growth throughout the region. There is also some information on the interurbans. This book was published in 1977, so it predates the post-Conrail mergers by CSX and Norfolk Southern, but it is still an excellent resource. Other railroads have been dealt with in some capacity by separate authors, such as the Cincinnati, Lebanon & Northern in John Hauck's book *Narrow Gauge in Ohio*, as well as the various Pennsylvania Railroad lines and some of the smaller narrow gauge systems. See the non-internet references at the bottom of this page for the full list.

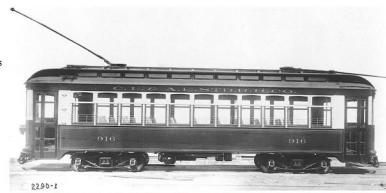
## The Map

The map on this site is something I put together from personal on-the-ground exploration, maps from books, libraries, or the USGS, and information from knowledgeable folks. This map does not represent the system as it would have appeared at any one point in time. It's more a map of where there have ever been streetcar, interurban, and railroad lines, as if you took all the maps ever made and overlaid them. The purpose is for those who are curious about whether there are/were tracks buried under the road they're driving on, or if the trolley poles holding up the traffic lights were actually for streetcars, or if a berm in the woods might be an old right-of-way. I have tried to differentiate between active and abandoned railroads, but I cannot be certain that lines aren't abandoned or just infrequently used. Of course, all the interurbans and streetcars are gone. Other transit infrastructure such as tunnels, major viaducts, canals, and major passenger and freight stations have also been added. Most of that information has been gathered from early 1900s USGS topographic maps. Therefore, some later changes may have been missed. While I have tried to make everything as correct as possible, I cannot make any guarantees about accuracy.

## Pictures

While exploring around town looking for information I took pictures of my on-site reconnaissance. There are hundreds of photos from all over the area, most starting around the year 2001. More and more pictures depict scenes that have already changed, removing traces of transit history that were once obvious. While most railroad aficionados take pictures of locomotives and other train movements, my focus is on rights-of-way, bridges, tunnels, buildings, and other examples of the physical plant. These are the things that most people see, but tend to ignore. What may be the obvious remains of a railroad line one day can be reduced to a mere memory after road construction or another building project. Someone could be living right on top of a line that was once an immensely important transit route for a community and not even know it. Photographs help bring to life some of the history that surrounds us. In more recent years I have added numerous historical photos from library archives and generous contributors.

I welcome any feedback, corrections, links, pictures, or questions you have, don't hesitate to [e-mail](#) me.



An interurban car for the Cincinnati, Lawrenceburg & Aurora. These were larger, heavier, and faster than streetcars, looking like a hybrid of a streetcar and a steam railroad passenger car.

# Search Feature

If you are looking to search for a specific thing on the Cincinnati Traction History, you're better off searching it on google and hoping it can direct you to this website. The lack of search feature makes it hard to find specific information.

## Navigation

[Main Entrance](#)

[About This Site](#)

[Map](#)

[Streetcars](#)

[Interurban Railways](#)

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[Other](#)

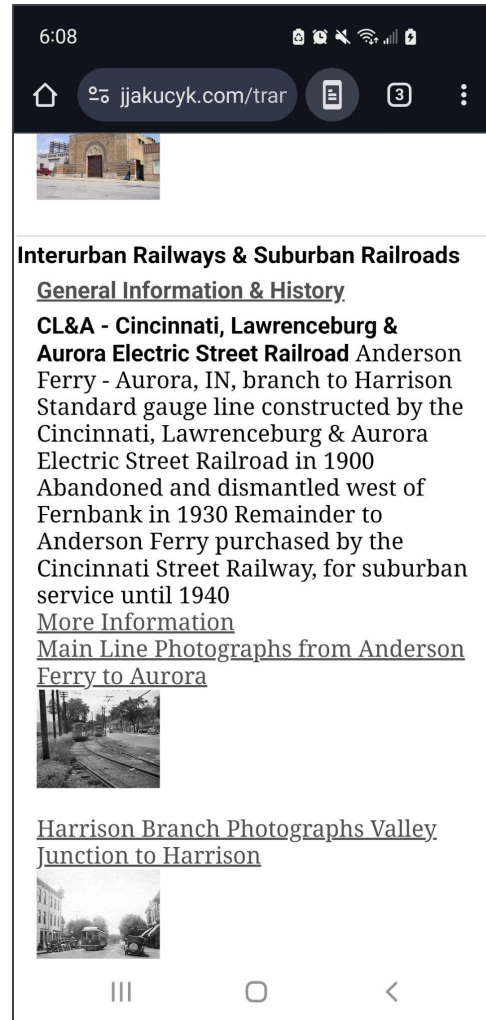
[Links](#)

[Acknowledgments](#)

[References](#)

# Mobile Usability

The Cincinnati Traction History website was most likely not made for phones or tablets. Since a phone screen is a lot smaller, it means there is a lot more scrolling to do when finding any information.





# Returning to Home Page

When trying to return to the Home page on both mobile and desktop, it has to be searched for. It also doesn't return the user to the top of the page, plopping them somewhere in the middle. Some pages have a home button, others don't.



Home button  
located at  
the top left of  
screen.

[Index](#)

Index button  
located at  
the bottom  
of the page.

# Branding

There is little to no branding anywhere on the site. With it being a simple HTML site, it is hard to grasp a specific identity from the sight to make it stand out from others. This can be fixed by making a logo to go next to the title of the website on each page.

## **Cincinnati Traction History**

**Dedicated to the history of the Cincinnati area's streetcar, interurban, and railroad lines**

# Inconsistency

While some pages are walls of text, others are a bunch of images. Many don't have dates, which is fine as not every image can be dated. It would be nice to know *around* when each image was taken, as some look very old while others look a lot newer from the 2000s.

## CG&P - Cincinnati, Georgetown & Portsmouth Railroad

Main Line to Georgetown  
Photographs from Columbia-Tusculum to Russellville



CG&P downtown station at 5th and Sycamore



Location of the CG&P station at Stacon Street and Stanley Avenues in Columbia-Tusculum



Historic photo of Kellogg Avenue at Stanley Avenue in Columbia-Tusculum



Historic photo of the CG&P on Kellogg Avenue in Columbia-Tusculum



Historic photo of the CG&P on Kellogg Avenue in Columbia-Tusculum

**Cincinnati Street Railway**

Line Data From Ordinance 322-1925

Lines with no data are not part of the 1925 ordinance

Street names have been changed to reflect current names as far as I can determine

**1 Chapel St.****2 Evanston, 4th & Vine-Montgomery & Dana.**

Vine-5th-Broadway-Gilbert-McMillan-Woodburn-Montgomery-Dana wye

Return, Montgomery-Woodburn-McMillan-Gilbert-Broadway-4th-Vine.

**3 Gilbert****4 Kennedy Heights, 6th & Main-Montgomery & Kennedy.**

Main-9th-Sycamore-Reading-Florence-Gilbert-McMillan-Park-Chapel-Woodburn-Montgomery-Kennedy wye (1)

Return, Montgomery-Woodburn-Chapel-Alms-Yale-Gilbert-Florence-Reading-Broadway-6th-Main.

**5 Norwood, 6th & Main-Pine & Harris.**

Main-9th-Sycamore-Reading-Florence-Gilbert-Montgomery-Harris-Forrest-Norwood-Pine

Return, Harris-Montgomery-Gilbert-Florence-Reading-Broadway-6th-Main.

**7 North Norwood, 6th & Walnut-Montgomery & Fenwick.**

6th-Vine-McMillan-Gilbert-Montgomery-Fenwick wye

Return, Montgomery-Gilbert-McMillan-Vine-9th-Walnut-6th.

**8 South Norwood, 6th & Main-Private ROW & Forrest.**

Main-9th-Sycamore-Reading-Florence-Gilbert-McMillan-Park-Chapel-Woodburn-Montgomery-Cleneay-Floral-Forrest-Kenilworth-Beech-Private ROW

Return, Forrest-Floral-Cleneay-Montgomery-Woodburn-Chapel-Alms-Yale-Gilbert-Florence-Reading-Sycamore-6th-Main.

**9 Vine-Norwood, 6th & Walnut-Spring Grove & Chester Park.**

6th-Vine-McMillan-Gilbert-Montgomery-Sherman-McNeil wye

Return, Sherman-Montgomery-Gilbert-McMillan-Vine-9th-Walnut-6th.

**15 Clark St., 5th & Walnut-Spring Grove & Chester Park.**

5th-Vine-12th-Central Ave.-Clark-Freeman-Liberty-Western-Spring Grove-Chester Park Loop

Return, Spring Grove-Western-Liberty-Freeman-Clark-Central Ave.-12th-Walnut-5th.

**16 Colerain Ave., 6th & Vine-Virginia & Colerain.**

6th-Elm-12th-Central Ave.-Clark-Baymiller-Liberty-Freeman-Central Ave.-Colerain-Spring Grove-Hamilton-Chase-Virginia

Return, Colerain-Central Ave.-Freeman-York-Linn-Clark-Central Ave.-12th-Elm-7th-Vine-6th.

**17 College Hill, 6th & Vine-North Bend & Oak.**

6th-Elm-McMicken-Mohawk-Central Ave.-Colerain-Spring Grove-Hamilton-North Bend

Return, Oak-Belmont-Hamilton-Spring Grove-Colerain-Central Ave.-Mohawk-McMicken-Elm-7th-Vine-6th.

**18 North Fairmount, 6th & Vine-Baltimore & Casper.**

6th-Elm-7th-John-8th-Freeman-Liberty-Western-Spring Grove-Harrison-State-Harrison-Beekman-Baltimore-Casper Loop

Return, Baltimore-Beekman-Harrison-State-Harrison-Spring Grove-Western-Liberty-Freeman-Clark-Linn-9th-Vine-6th.

**19 John St., 4th & Vine-Hopple & Beekman.**

4th-John-Findlay-Baymiller-Bank-Colerain-Harrison-State-Harrison-Westwood-Quebec-Quebec Loop

Return, Quebec-Westwood-Harrison-State-Harrison-Central Ave.-5th-Vine-4th.

**20 6th St., 4th & Vine-Hopple & Beekman.**

4th-John-6th-Baymiller-Liberty-Western-Spring Grove-Meeker-Hopple-Beekman wye

Return, Hopple-Meeker-Spring Grove-Western-Liberty-Baymiller-5th-Vine-4th.

**21 Westwood, 6th & Vine-Glenmore & Montana.**

6th-Elm-McMicken-Mohawk-Central Ave. Harrison-State-Harrison-Glenmore

Return, Montana-Harrison-State-Harrison-Central Ave.-Mohawk-McMicken-Elm-7th-Vine-6th.

**27 East End, 5th & Baymiller-Eastern & Archer.**

5th-Broadway-Pearl-Front-Eastern-Archer wye (2)

Return, Eastern-3rd-Martin-Pearl-Broadway-4th-Baymiller-5th

**28 Union Depot-Carrel, 3rd & John-Eastern & Carrel.**

# Primary Audience

It's primary audience is mainly just for people who need or want information on a subject from this site. By only catering towards people just looking for information, it neglects a possibly curious audience that are put off by the out of date design and hard to find information.