## First

## Eastbay Nov z - 1969

## Rapid Transit

By HARRE W. DEMORO Tribune Staff Writer

"The essential feature of rapid transit is to keep moving."

This is not advice from the builders of the Bay Area Rapid Transit system, who promises to have trains running in the Eastbay in 1971.

It was printed in 1906 on the back of a timetable of the San Francisco, Oakland and San Jose Railway, the Eastbay's first rapid transit system.

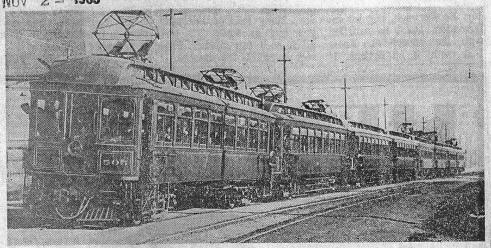
The company, known to gengrations of commuters as the Key System went into business 66 years ago. The event, recalled today by only a handful of historians, occurred on October 26, 1903.

The plans and promises of the Key System were just as advanced and enthusiastic as those promoted today by BART. But it only took eight years to build the Key System. BART may need 11.

The company was backed by Francis Marion "Borax" Smith, who came to Oakland before the turn of the century after making a fortune in the borax business.

Smith quickly began gaining control of local trolley lines and planned to build a gigantic empire of transit, property and utility companies. His Realty Syndicate combine was one of the largest landowners in Alameda County.

Electric railways were land and Alameda.



ONE OF THE FIRST KEY SYSTEM 'RAPID TRANSIT' TRAINS IN 1903

Ornate wood coaches halted at Adeline and 54th Streets on way to ferry

being built all over the country and Smith and his associates were mindful of the experience of real estate interests in other cities. It was a common and successful pracbuild trolley lines to it, raising the value of the land and making rich men out of the promoters.

The Smith interests believed that the Eastbay would prosper, and therefore so would their ventures, if there was fast train service to San Francisco. The Southern Pacific ran ancient steam-powered trains to ferry piers in Oak-

The San Francisco, Oakland merchants along Shattuck and San Jose Railway was formed to compete with the SP. The company was to operate fast ferries between San Francisco and the Eastbay. tice to buy property and then Passengers would transfer to speedy electric trains taking them to Eastbay cities, and to San Jose.

> The San Jose line was never built. But Smith succeeded in developing a modern ferry system and a network of electric interurban lines in the Eastbay.

His first venture was to Berkeley, where commuters had long been unhappy over SP service. Residents and

Avenue were less than enthusiastic about the smoky steam locomotives.

The ferry pier was built at the end of a long trestle stretching almost to Yerba Buena Island. Rails were laid along Adeline Street and Shattuck Avenue to University Avenue in downtown Berkeley. The route between University and Shattuck avenues to Alcatraz Avenue and Adeline Street is the exact path being used today by BART.

on October 26, 1903. The modern electric cars in their flashy orange paint scheme

and the ultra-modern ferries lured many customers from the SP. The Key System had trouble finding room for all of the passengers. Soon, Smith extended service to other areas, and the SP was forced to electrify its lines, which evolved into the "Red Train"

system. Service on 40th Street to a station at 41st Street and Piedmont Avenue began in 1904. A line to Grand Avenue and Broadway opened in 1906, followed by service to the Claremont Hotel in 1908, and north Berkeley and Albany in 1911.

Trains did not operate into downtown Oakland on a permanent basis until 1917. City officials objected to operation of long trains on 12th Street. Until special rolling stock was obtained streetcars shuttled passengers from a train terminal in west Oakland into the downtown area.

Smith interests owned the Claremont Hotel and also the long-vanished "Key Route Inn," a hotel similar in appearance to the Claremont. It was built over the train tracks at Grand Avenue and Broadway. Smith and his associates lost control about 1912, but Service to Berkeley began several major extensions were made later: to the Trestle Glen district in 1917, and into Piedmont in 1924. Other ex-

Oakland Tril Sun., Nov. 2, 1969 1

tensions were made in ley and East Oakland and east Oakland World War II.

Ferry service was doned after Key System t began using the rails of Bay Bridge in 1939. This proved rail service laster til April 20, 1958, when a 0 made the last run down y Street and buses took over-

The Oakland Terminal It road still uses some of the electric line tracks to siindustrial plants in west Ct land. An underpass is used East Bay Municipal Uti-District vehicles leading tesewage treatment plant Emeryville.

The Claremont Hotel mains, and perhaps more i portant, so are the cities t trains helped build.