

**Finding aid for the Street Railway
Weekly/Trolley Topics collection
Collection 035**

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Describing Archives: A Content Standard

Grand Rapids Public Library, Grand Rapids History and Special Collections Department

March 1987

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Summary Information

Repository	Grand Rapids Public Library, Grand Rapids History and Special Collections Department
Title	Street Railway Weekly/Trolley Topics collection
Date [inclusive]	1904-1929
Extent	0.21 Linear feet One box
Language	English
Abstract	Street Railway Weekly, later Trolley Topics, was a periodical published by the Grand Rapids Railway Co., a nationally recognized leader in the street railway industry. It was designed for the use of the electric streetcar patrons of Grand Rapids, Michigan. Distributed at no cost, the pamphlet format combined jokes, facts, entertainment news and an editorial espousing the company line. The issues document the impact of the automobile and the bus on the streetcar system.

Biographical/Historical note

Rail streetcar service in Grand Rapids began on May 10, 1865, and ran from the Detroit & Milwaukee Railroad Depot to Canal Street. The Grand Rapids Street Railway Company was soon joined in competition with additional lines, among them the Division Street Line, Reed's Lake Line and the Scribner Avenue Line. These and other early horse powered lines were merged into the Street Railway Co. of Grand Rapids in 1883. In 1887, the Valley City Street and Cable Co. was granted a franchise to a line from Canal to Union., bringing service to the hill district. In 1888 the construction was completed and the first cable car made a run on April 18. Several new routes were soon open to the Valley City Street and Cable Co. and competition with the Street Railway Co. was soon bringing confusion and hardships to customers, as connections between the two lines did not exist. These companies agreed to merge in 1890 as the Consolidated Street Railway Co.

The Consolidated Street Railway Co. immediately resolved a labor dispute through negotiations. The next strike against the new company was much harder to fight. The reconstruction of the systems into one upgraded system was not completed when the Panic of 1893 hit Grand Rapids. Several local industries failed, including the Nelson & Matter Co. and John Widdicomb Co. Other factories were idle. With the Grand Rapids economy at a standstill, the Consolidated Street Railway Co. was crippled. In 1900 the company was bought out by E.W. Clark & Co. of Philadelphia, PA, and reincorporated as the Grand Rapids Railway Co. Under the new management, the Grand Rapids Railway Co., with sufficient operating funds, became a model of street railway systems and won several national awards. This system continued until driven out of business by automobiles and buses in the 1930s.

Scope and Contents note

Spanning 1904-1929, the issues document the impact of the automobile and the bus on the streetcar system. The issues of the late 1920s suggest the passing fad of the automobile and extol the street railway system. The six sided folding pamphlet generally included an editorial, jokes section, listings of local plays or shows and quick facts spread throughout. While originally serving primarily as an entertainment for the patron, it developed into a means of public relations.

Note: Serial cataloging in WorldCat for GRPL. Not in local catalog.

Administrative Information

Publication Information

Grand Rapids Public Library, Grand Rapids History and Special Collections Department March 1987

Immediate Source of Acquisition note

Library purchase, accession number 00.000

Related Materials

Related Archival Materials note

Coll. 105, Grand Rapids Railway Collection

Coll. 197, GRPL Railroad Collection

Coll. 248, James Winslow Collection

Coll. 285, GRPL Periodical Collection

Controlled Access Headings

Corporate Name(s)

- Grand Rapids Railway Co.

Geographic Name(s)

- Grand Rapids (Mich.) -- History

Subject(s)

- Street-railroads -- Michigan -- Grand Rapids

Street Railway Weekly

Collection Inventory

Street Railway Weekly		
Volume I		
	Box	Folder
#14, September 3, 1904	1	1
Volume II		
	Box	Folder
#1, May 20, 1905 Encapsulated	1	1
#2, May 27, 1905	1	1
#7, July 1, 1905	1	1
#9, July 15, 1905	1	1
#12, Aug. 5, 1905	1	1
#13, Aug. 12, 1905	1	1
#18, September 16, 1905	1	1

Trolley Topics

Trolley Topics		
Volume III, May 5-September 8, 1906		
	Box	Folder
Nos. 1-7, 8(2), 9-12, 13-20. (#13 missing 2/11/2009)	1	2
Volume IV #1-18, May 11-September 7, 1907		
	Box	Folder
Nos. 1(2), 2-3, 4(2), 5(2), 6-18	1	3
[New Series, Monthly]		
	Box	Folder
Vol. 1 #1 [encapsulated and damaged, #14-16, 1923-1924	1	4
Vol. 2 #1 (December) 2(January 1925) -5, 7, 9-11(Nov), 1924-25	1	5
Vol. 3 #4 (March)-6, 8-12 (November), 1926	1	6
Vol. 4 #1 (January)-4, 7, 9, 10, 12 (December), 1927	1	7
Vol. 5 #2 (February)-4, 6, 8, 9, 12 (December), 1928	1	8
Vol. 6 #1 (January)-6, 9, 12(December), 1929	1	9