

## Car No. 100

Car No. 100 of the Iowa Railway Historical Museum epitomizes the grand old tradition of electric railroading. The big vehicle represents the high point in interurban development: in size, in decor, in speed. A 60-footer, it matched the standard steam railroad coach of its day in length. Its weight of 52 tons likewise was representative of trunk-line rolling stock. Its height, width, and general contour helped make it a glamor car of high-speed interurbans. Indeed, the well-built car was regarded as the queen of the Iowa electrics.

The trolley was strictly a de luxe product, slated to run in limited service at extra fare. As originally operated the car ran as a second unit of a two-car train. Classed as a buffet-parlor-observation unit, the all-steel, clerestory-roofed vehicle was built to match the luxury of the finest steam trains without the latter's dirt and cinders. With its quartersawed oak interior and Wilton carpets it was as far removed from the typical trolley as an old-fashioned day coach was from a Pullman.

A passenger had his choice of a restful lounge chair or a leather upholstered davenport. Ladies,



in particular, appreciated the large, plate glass mirrors which decorated the bulkheads. For the businessman and commercial traveler there was a writing desk, complete with stationery bearing company lettering.

And the meals. They were served from a tiny kitchenette by a uniformed attendant. An attractive menu card with the imprinted insignia of the "Cedar Valley Road," as the line was called, listed a variety of a la carte items. A typical bill of fare about 1915 featured braised beef a la jardiniere (50¢). But one could settle for a ham sandwich at 15¢. Several entrees were included, along with side dishes of pickles and olives. The vegetable consisted of green peas or asparagus (hot or cold), but curiously enough there was no Iowa corn listed. Iowa being a "dry" state, the road did not serve spirited beverages, yet it more than made up for this lack with nine kinds of soft drinks. The Grecian-sounding "lemonade, apollinaris, splits," was said to be a hot-weather favorite.

The No. 100 was one of three cars manufactured in 1915 by the McGuire-Cummings Company for the newly-completed Waterloo, Cedar Falls & Northern Railway. All three were identical and designed to operate on the 64-mile Cedar Rapids-Waterloo run. Most of the route was on private right-of-way with track and road-bed built to steam-road specifications. Geared to



exceed 60 m.p.h., they were among the fastest interurban units in the country. Due to their fleetness the WCF&N polled fifth place in running time (excluding stops) in a national speed survey covering electric railways.

Such was the heritage of old No. 100. That is why it is a prize possession of the Iowa Railway Historical Museum, a cynosure for railroad fans, and an item of interest to all historically-minded Iowans.

The "traction orange" vehicle was the last electric interurban passenger car to operate in regular service in Iowa. Incidentally, the Waterloo, Cedar Falls & Northern, on which it ran, was the last interurban line to be built in the state. In 1956, when the No. 100 was donated to the Museum, the road became the Waterloo Railroad, jointly owned by the Illinois Central and Rock Island railroads. Dieselization was in the offing and passenger service by interurban car ended in February, 1956. Being in good condition, the No. 100 was towed on its own wheels in a Milwaukee Road freight train from Cedar Rapids to Trask. At the latter point it ran under its own power on the rails of the Southern Iowa to its permanent home in Centerville.

Unfortunately, the No. 100 was a single-end car, whereas the Southern Iowa, on which it was to be operated, did not have a loop or wye at the end of its line for turning. Not to be daunted,



the new owners put the matter before the friendly little railroad company on whose property the car was to be housed. Short lines are resourceful, and the Southern Iowa is doubly so. It agreed to have its general superintendent, Lawrence W. Breeze, an ingenious electrical engineer, convert the museum-car to double-end control. With nothing to guide him but his own intuitive skill Mr. Breeze personally re-wired the car so it could be operated from either end. In addition, Jim Levis and his son, Bob, spent nearly a week in Centerville installing brake equipment for double-end control.

To get the full significance of this operating museum on an operating railway one should ride on a weekend excursion. Let us go on the popular "fall foliage excursion," as run in October, 1958. On the day of the trip fifty-five railroad fans and historians converge in Centerville from all over Iowa and neighboring states. They come by automobile, bus, and train. They are of all ages, the men predominating in number. In several instances wives and children go along. But the most noticeable feature is the prevalence of cameras.

No. 100 is spotted a block from the "square," and long before its departure the fans and visitors have congregated. Outside the freshly-painted trolley, passengers are buying tickets, signing waivers, and taking pictures. At the appointed



time the whistle is blown for late-comers, and the car leaves for Moravia. James Levis is at the controls with Elmer Carr as conductor. Both of these Museum officials have trainmen's caps and take their responsibilities seriously. Also up in the motorman's cab is Master Mechanic Harley Ashby, while back in the aisle is Charles Poffenberger, the traffic manager. Operation is at all times closely supervised by one or more of the railroad officials or platform men.

A stop is made at the car house, where camera fans disembark to take photographs of the Southern Iowa's rolling stock. The historically-minded gaze at the nineteenth century, single-truck line car, while others "snap" the relatively modern Baldwin-Westinghouse steeple-cab electric locomotive. Going along West Madison street calls for more picture-taking. Here the No. 100 rumbles down the center of the tree-lined street creating a nostalgic scene of rural interurban railroading at its best.

Presently the car veers onto the private right-of-way going down a toboggan-like dip through woods. Then climbing a steep grade toward the junction, it is switched to the north. Now the car is on the roadbed of the old steam route which formerly extended beyond Moravia to Albia. Built in 1880, it was not electrified until 1914. A few miles north of the junction Levis applies the air brakes, and the trolley stops for no apparent



reason. Then, taking the controller-handle, he walks to the other end of the car and prepares to run the vehicle in the other direction. Meanwhile willing hands pull down one trolley pole and raise the other. Why? The party is to go up a spur to Mine No. 4, worked by the Sunshine Coal Company. It is said to be the largest shaft mine in Iowa. From its tipples comes the coal which accounts for the largest share of the electric line's revenue and its main reason for existence.

Returning to the main line, the car makes a photo stop on the deck-and-truss bridge spanning the Chariton River. Leaving the river bottoms, the No. 100 speeds by Trask and travels through flat farmland. Pine trees line the right-of-way, and quail scamper in the underbrush. With windows open wide passengers get a close-to-nature exhilaration on the novel outing. At Moravia the trolleyists swarm out of the car to inspect the station and look over the town.

Meanwhile, the volunteer crewmen switch poles, marker lights and white flags (signifying an extra train) for the return trip. Notwithstanding the holiday spirit, the men who operate the car are all business. Safety is their first requisite. Others may refresh themselves with the plentiful supply of soft drinks stowed in the baggage compartment. But the temporary trainmen tend strictly to the job at hand.

The run back to Centerville is varied in that



it includes a jog down the Belt Line to the Burlington interchange and freight yard. The "Belt" starts at the junction, branching to the southwest and circling around the western city limits. Also at the junction one sees about a thousand feet of the partly abandoned branch which once served a large coal tippie at Appanoose and then continued on to Mystic. It had trackage to both the Midway Mine and Sunshine Mine No. 3.

Going down the Belt the operator stops the car at State Highway 2. Here the conductor gets out and flags the well-filled trolley across the busy thoroughfare while gaping motorists look on. In a few minutes the ponderous 100 sways over the yard tracks which connect the Burlington with the electric line. Nearby is a large brick yard, a source of revenue for both railroads. After seeing the industrial area, the party goes back to downtown Centerville, end of the ride.

The fifty-five trolley tourists have been on the longest railway operating Museum in America.

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