



## Public Transportation of the Past

If you want to travel the streets of downtown Brunswick quickly these days, you're most likely hopping in a car and driving to your destination. But there was a time, before cars, when you would hop onto a streetcar instead.

Late nineteenth century Brunswick was a boomtown, with a bustling port and a vibrant business district downtown. As residential neighborhoods developed further from the main corridors of Bay,

Newcastle, and Gloucester streets, business owners and workers needed a way to commute more easily to their places of work.

The Brunswick Company developed the first streetcar system in the city. This business also owned the Oglethorpe Hotel, the Hotel St. Simons, and - appropriately - the trolley system on St. Simons Island that transported people from the pier to the hotel. These first streetcars on both the island and the mainland were drawn by horses or mules.

By 1909, Brunswick was ready to move into the future with two

electric streetcar lines. The lines were completed in 1911 by the City & Suburban Railway Company and ran along the city's main thoroughfares including Bay, Union, Newcastle, Albany, and Gloucester. Poles along the route and lines directly above the tracks supplied power to the cars. According to research and oral histories compiled by local historian Tyler Bagwell, the streetcars were yellow, with glassed-in windows and woven-straw seats, and cost around 10 cents to ride.

The electric streetcar system was relatively short-lived. Service was discontinued in 1926, just two years after the opening of the F.J.

Torras Causeway to St. Simons and coinciding with the rise in automobile ownership across America. Today, in Brunswick's Queen Square the last of the remaining electrical poles for the streetcar stands alone under a magnolia tree, a reminder of a once-extensive public transportation system.

**TOP:** A streetcar in front of City Hall - from the collection of Tyler Bagwell.

**INSET** (left): Newcastle Street, circa 1915, with electrical lines for the streetcar system - from the collection of the Coastal Georgia Historical Society.



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