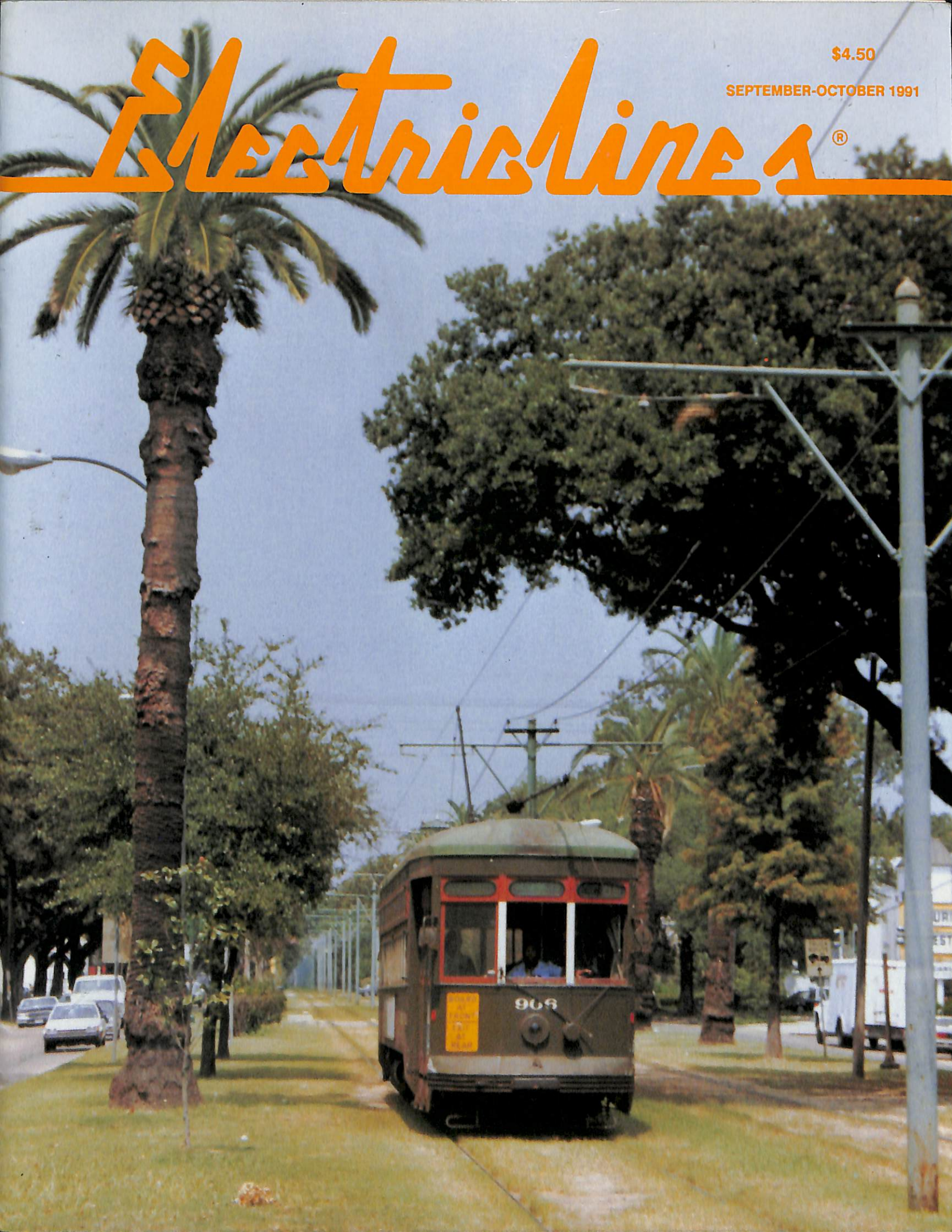


\$4.50

SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 1991

Electriclines[®]





Interior of a Melbourne car. *J. Greller*



Refurbished Melbourne 455 on the Riverfront line. *J. Greller*



With its track switch-iron resting smartly above its headlight, 911 will work the Saturday evening shift on St. Charles. *J. Greller*

After the feasibility study in 1985, RTCG and the RTA began discussions with UMTA on the possibility of federal participation in the public/private partnership for mass transit. A joint application was then submitted to UMTA in 1986. Construction began early in 1988, funded from the Republican National Convention held in New Orleans in August of that same year.

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The RTCG is still a partner in providing streetcar guides whose function is to handle fares and give information and manage services for ongoing ground activities associated with the project.

The Riverfront line has just started construction of its on-site maintenance facility, and future expansion to the Central Business District and into the Uptown area is being studied.

RTA
Regional Transit Authority



Car 947 swings into the barn after the evening rush in 1990. *W. Volkmer*

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BALLARAT

BALLARAT: AN AUSTRALIAN STREETCAR PRESERVATION PROJECT

by Robin Clark

The Australian city of Ballarat is located some 62 miles (100 kms) west of Melbourne in the state of Victoria. Discovery of gold in Western Victoria in the 1850s brought new-found wealth to the community. A major mining center was the Ballarat district. Through the wealth generated from gold the settlement at Ballarat quickly developed from a mining camp to a town and then to an important regional city. In recent years it has become a major center for tourist visitors, with the attractions focusing on the region's mining past. An additional attraction is a number of vintage trams operated by the Ballarat Tramway Preservation Society.

The preservation group operates an 8/10th mile (1.3 km) length of track laid on the public street beside Ballarat's Lake Wendouree not far from the city center. The single track, with a passing siding midway, is all that remains of the former Ballarat tramway system.

At the turn of the century, as the Australian urban population grew, all the state capitals and most of the major regional cities developed street rail systems as a means of providing efficient public transport. However, by the early 1970s these were mainly memories. Melbourne retained its comprehensive network, one line remained in Adelaide, and preservation organizations operated limited services in the Victorian cities of Ballarat and Bendigo. There are

(Above Left) Cars 18 and 38 inside the Ballarat Tramway Preservation Society sheds. (Above Right) Car No. 18, built in 1913 for the Prahran and Malvern Tramway Trust. Ron Clark

also tramway museums in Adelaide, Brisbane, Melbourne, and Sydney, but these operate in special reserves and not on the streets.

HISTORY

As the community grew, the Ballarat City Council recognized the need for urban transport, and in 1884 recommended a street rail system. The decision was made to draw on experience from the horse-drawn trams of Adelaide rather than the cable cars of nearly Melbourne.

The Ballarat Tramway Company Ltd. was granted rights to operate a service in the city. In October, 1887 the first rails were laid to the 4 ft. 8-1/2 in. (1435 mm) gauge. The first service began on December 26, 1887, using double-decked horse-drawn vehicles seating 44 passengers.

The Company, financially unstable, experienced poor relationships with the Council, mainly over the poor condition of the tracks. Inadequate finances forced the Company to economize in its operations, with resulting reductions in track and vehicle maintenance.

A British-based organization, the Electric Supply Company of Victoria, was formed to develop the generation and



No. 40, built in 1913, was the last tram to carry passengers in Ballarat on September 19th, 1971. Ron Clark

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supply of electricity for the Victorian communities. The firm saw the operation of a tramway system as an initial source of income. In 1902 ownership of the city's transport system was transferred from the troubled Ballarat Tramway Company to the Electric Supply Company of Victoria Ltd. Electrification and further expansion of the tramway system commenced in 1905, the work being completed in 1913.

Electric Supply Company was one of a number generating and supplying electricity to the State of Victoria. The state government decided that it should assume responsibility for the control of electricity generation and distribution within the state, and in 1918 the State Electricity Commission of Victoria was established to take over the functions and assets of the private companies. As a result the Commission reluctantly became a tramway operator. It undertook modernization of the system by upgrading the track as well as purchasing tram cars from Melbourne and Adelaide which had been superseded by newer equipment there.

By the 1950s increasing operating costs combined with low patronage led to heavy accumulated losses. The Commission began to lobby for government approval to close down the tramway system and replace it with buses. The first announcement, in 1962, of the proposed closure resulted in public pressure on the Ballarat City Council and the State Government with the result that closure was deferred. Finally, in 1970, permission was granted for the termination of the system.

The shutdown came in three stages between August and September 1971. The last tram, car No. 40, ran on Sunday, September 19, 1971. A crowd of 5,000 and a brass band bade farewell to the vehicle on its special late-night run, an event covered by a local radio station.

PRESERVATION

The Preservation Society was formed in 1971, just before tramway closure. The intention was to preserve part of the system by operating a short track beside Lake Wendouree and the Botanical Gardens as a tourist attraction. The Society is a non-profit organization with work performed on a voluntary basis by tramway enthusiasts.

Agreement was gained from the City Council to operate a service on the public roadway adjacent to the Botanical Gardens beside the lake, and also a link through the gardens to the tram sheds.

The Electricity Commission donated five cars, some equipment and spare parts. A number of trams donated to neighboring councils were also loaned to the Society on a long-term basis. Initial work involved the restoration of a number of vehicles as well as re-erecting power cables above the tracks. Preparation also included the training of Society drivers at the tramways' drivers school in Melbourne.

Soon after the closure of the tramway system the old tram sheds built on the north of the lake were closed and



No. 18 and No. 38 are painted in the State Electricity Commission's green and cream colors. Ron Clark

demolished, with the site turned to residential use. This meant that the Society would have to find an alternative home. A site was allocated by the Ballarat City Council adjacent to the southern edge of the Botanical Gardens, providing ready access to the road line. A new tram shed was built on this site, the building being large enough to store the entire fleet as well as providing workshop facilities.

In an official opening ceremony on February 1, 1975 car No. 40 was driven by the Chairman of the State Electricity Commission through a barrier of paper streamers.

The current fleet consists of 10 trams from the Ballarat system, of which 8 are single-truck and 2 are larger double-truck vehicles. In addition there are two ex-Melbourne cars as well as a horse-drawn tram which is in the process of reconstruction. The former Melbourne cars are also used on the tourist line, and it is intended to operate the horse-drawn tram when it is completed.

The Society operates as the Ballarat Vintage Tramway in carrying passengers on the tram cars. Tram rides comprise a return trip on the road line. Service operates on Saturdays, Sundays, public holidays and school holidays. Besides providing tram rides the Society has a museum exhibit housed in a non-operational tram car sited in the sheds.

In the near future the Society plans to extend the track to completely encircle the lake. However, the existing track is showing its age and has started to subside, so relaying this track has a more urgent call on the Society's funds.

By their foresight, their enterprise, and their dedication the Society's membership has managed to preserve an element of Australia's urban transport past. As the vehicles are maintained in operating condition in period colors and run on the public street, they provide a more vital impact than they would have if they had only become a static museum exhibit. ■

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California type built in 1926. Ron Clark

