

The operators

The Melbourne Tramway & Omnibus Company (MTOC) was given a 31 year monopoly licence (1885-1916) by the Victorian Parliament to build and run a tram network in partnership with the 12 city councils that it serviced. The company initially proposed a horse tram network but won the licence by changing its proposal to the "modern" American-designed cable tram system. Another smaller company built one connecting line along High St, Northcote.

Key people

Francis Boardman Clapp (1833-1920), MTOC founder and managing director, was born in the United States and worked in public transport in Victoria then Melbourne from the 1850s. He was a hands-on, shrewd businessman who kept his company profitable during Australia's devastating 1890s depression. His son, Harold, later became chairman of the Victorian Railway Commissioners.

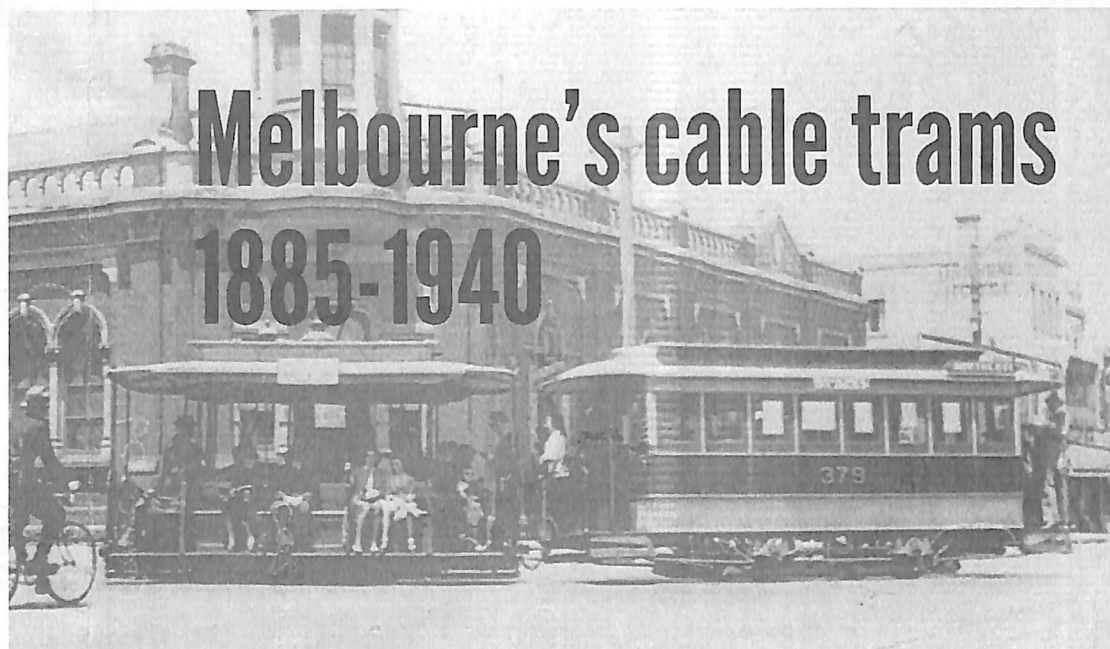
George Smith Duncan (1852-1930), MTOC chief engineer, was born in New Zealand to Scottish parents. He was a skilled engineer who had previously built two cable tram lines in Dunedin, New Zealand. His inventions and improvements to existing technologies enabled Melbourne's vast system to work reliably under heavy loads over many decades and won him accolades from other engineers.

Facts & figures

- 18 routes (incl. Northcote line) built 1885-91, closed 1925-40
- 75 km of double track (Melbourne now has 250 km of double electric track)
- 12 engine houses to drive cables up to 9 km in length
- 17 tram sheds to house 600 tram sets (Melbourne now has 8 tram depots)
- Head office and tramway construction factory
- Connecting horse tram and horse omnibus routes with sheds and stables

Recommended reading

John Keating, *Mind the Curve*, Melbourne University Press, 1970 (available at the Melbourne Tram Museum bookshop).



The 1850s Gold Rush made Melbourne one of the wealthiest cities in the world. Then in the 1880s, Melbourne became the centre of Australia's land boom when speculators borrowed large amounts to buy land – thinking it would double in price within a year. These were the heady years of *Marvellous Melbourne* when many grand buildings were erected and our extensive cable tram network was financed and built.

How it worked

Cable trams in Melbourne operated as two short vehicles joined together – the dummy (an open vehicle in front) and the car (a closed carriage behind). The trams did not have motors – only a grip mechanism that extended through the dummy's floor into a tunnel under the roadway. In this tunnel was a constantly moving metal cable up to nine km long that ran for 18 hours a day. In the early years it ran at 13 km per hour; in latter years it increased to 20 km per hour.



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Partial Remains



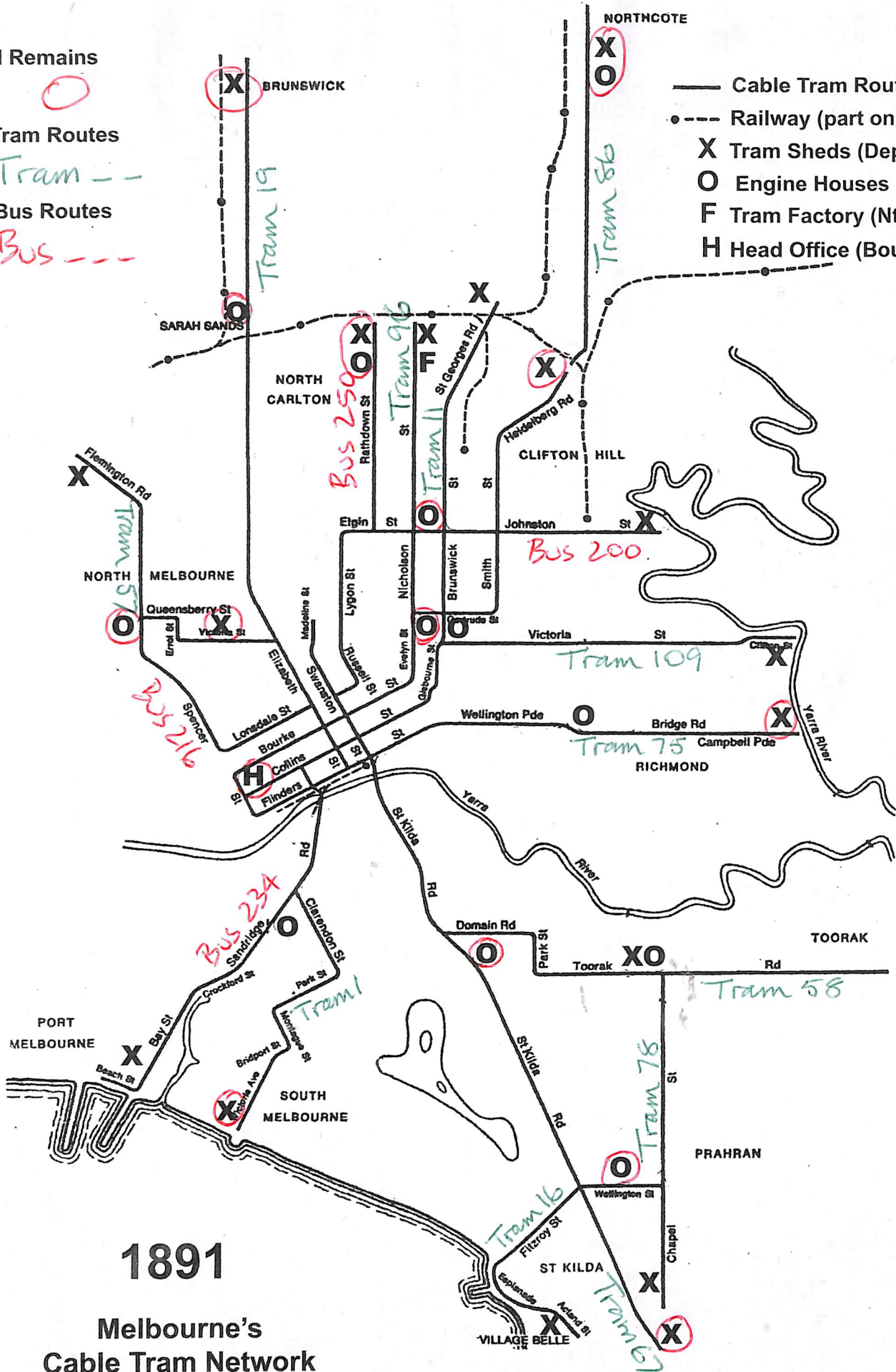
2018 Tram Routes

Tram ---

2018 Bus Routes

Bus - - -

- Cable Tram Routes
- - - - Railway (part only)
- X Tram Sheds (Depots)
- O Engine Houses
- F Tram Factory (Nth Fitzroy)
- H Head Office (Bourke St)



1891

Melbourne's Cable Tram Network