

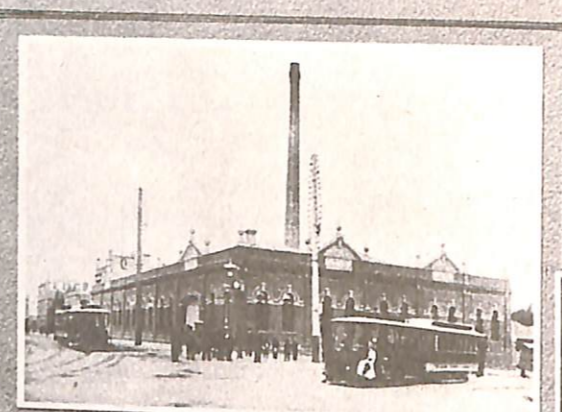
THE MELBOURNE CABLE TRAMS 1885-1940



JACK CRANSTON

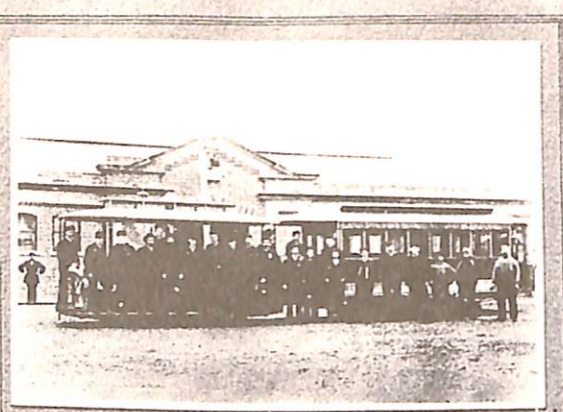


RICHMOND, 11th NOV. 1885. ABERT'S PHOTO.

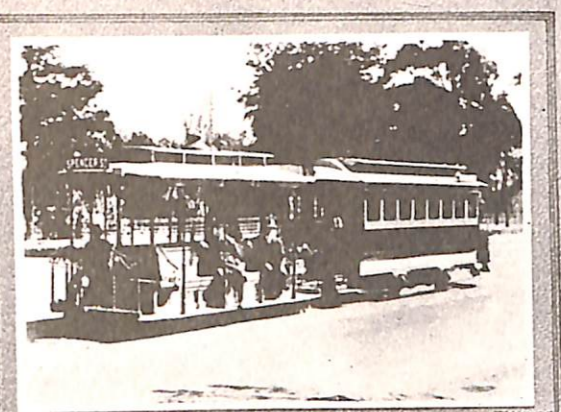


CITYBOUNDS TRAMS AT FITZROY POWER HOUSE - 1887.

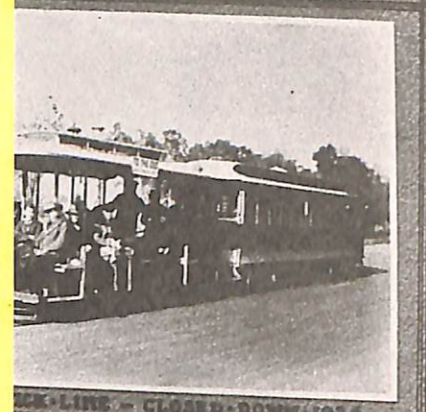
185
1940



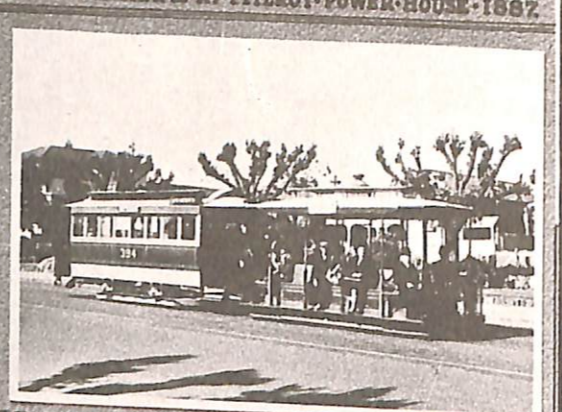
AT RICHMOND TERMINUS - 1887. HISTORICAL SOCIETY'S PHOTO.



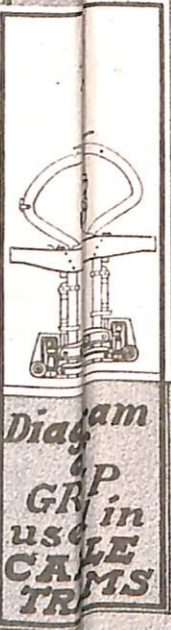
NO. 1 TRAM RUNNING ON NICHOLSON STREET. TRAMWAYS PHOTO.



TRAM LINE - CLOSED DOWN - 1935.



RUNNING THROUGH NORTHCOTE - SOUTH.



CITY TERMINUS - BOURKE STREET - WEST.



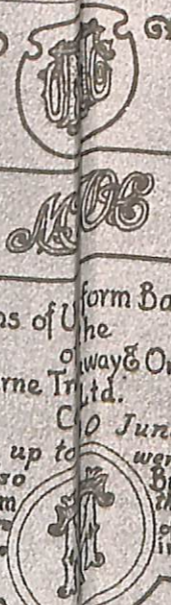
THIS CAR'S LAST RUN IN.



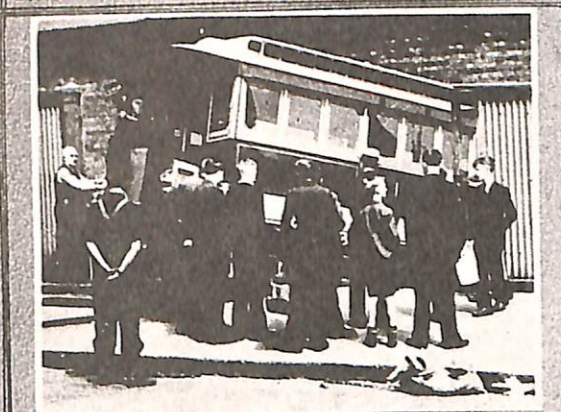
DEPOT WITH BUSES IN BACKGROUND.



SHUNTING AT SUBURBAN TERMINUS.



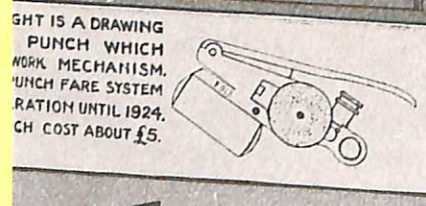
AWAITING TO SHUNT - SAT. 26 OCT. 1940.



NO. 1 TRAM ENTERING NATIONAL MUSEUM. HERALD PHOTO.

Cable System Traffic Statistics - for Period 1st July 1916 to 26th Oct. 1940.

2,018,738,930	Passengers carried
214,585,146	Miles run
£17,435,400	Revenue



The Passing of the Melbourne Cable Tramways

The Last Trip was run on Bourke Street to Clifton Hill Depot, Saturday 26 October 1940.

Support by Horse Omnibuses was instituted in 1869 by the Melbourne Omnibus Co. which changed its name to The Melbourne Tramway & Omnibus Co. and thereafter worked for the introduction of Cable Tramways. The first Cable Line opened for traffic 11th November 1885, which had been constructed as a trial line by the Melbourne Tramway & Omnibus Co. on behalf of the Trust. Loans were raised in London by the Trust which constructed Cable Tracks & Power Houses for Clifton Hill, Nicholson Street, Victoria Bridge, Clifton Hill, Nicholson Street, Abbotsford, St. Kilda, Prahran, North and South Melbourne, and lastly St. Kilda Esplanade, which had also been laid to Toorak from Prahran line and to Abbotsford line. The Esplanade line was opened on 1st October 1891. The Company's Capital provided Rolling Stock and



PHOTOS. OF SECTION OF WIRE ROPE AS USED IN CABLE SYSTEM

Power House Equipment. As each line was completed it was leased to the Company whose lease expired on 30th June 1916. Total mileage in Cable System was 45.9 miles of double track. A temporary Tramway Board was in control from 1916 to 1919. The Cable System was gradually converted to Electric or Motor Bus operation from 1925 by the Melbourne & Metropolitan Tramways Board, which was constituted under Act No. 2995, 1918, and which had operated the Cable Tramways from 14th Nov. 1919, excepting Northcote Cable Tramway - taken over 2nd Feb. 1920.

Compiled by A.R. Turnbull from authentic records. Co-operation of F. King, R.L. Mackenzie & H.G. de la Miel. Photos. is acknowledged.

Jack Cranston says: 'This book was not written to replace what has already been written about Melbourne's cable tram system, but to add to the existing literature the understanding I gained of its operations firstly, through the close study of blueprints which belonged to my grandfather (a contractor who carried out work for the Melbourne Tramways Trust during the construction of the system) and, secondly, from a series of interviews I conducted with some of the surviving members of the network's workforce. 'I have always been an admirer of the work of John Keating. His book, Mind the Curve, is the authoritative work on the history of the Melbourne cable trams, and what I have done is to build on the foundations he laid so well.'

Front jacket painting: Swanston Street looking over Bourke Street, 1895. Oil painting by Desmond Trowell.

THE MELBOURNE CABLE TRAMS 1885-1940

JACK CRANSTON

Jack Cranston

Craftsman Publishing
Melbourne 1988

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Both Sir Hubert Opperman and the staff of the Knox City Library encouraged me to write this book by helping to ascertain the level of public interest in Melbourne's cable trams.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, I would like to thank the following men for their reminiscences.

Mr Danton Carson; the late Mr E P Duxbury; Mr Eric Hobday; Mr Abel Kay; Mr Jock McDonald; Mr Cyril Maybus; Mr Frank Price; the late Mr Cyril Tucker.

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F OREWORD

After the last journey was completed on Saturday night, 26 October 1940, the cable tram system of Melbourne came near to being forgotten.

It was wartime, after all, and there were more crucial matters to be considered. The passing of the trams was mourned by many of the old admirers; but for the younger generation there was nothing much to remember about the vast system other than the last two surviving lines running through Bourke Street.

Thirty years on, when the Melbourne University Press published my book *Mind the Curve*, a number of nostalgic memories seemed to have been stirred. By 1985 there was sufficient public interest, and perhaps curiosity, to promote a celebration of the centenary of the cable network's inauguration.

During the dark years after 1940, a handful of dedicated enthusiasts, notably A E Twentyman and John Alfred (both deceased) and C N Govett, continued their detailed researches and committed the results to writing – though mainly for record rather than for general publication. More recently further valuable material has been collected and put on display by members of the Tramway Museum Society of Victoria.

Surprisingly, not many of the deeper delvers into cable lore and history have themselves been tramway men.

Neither has John Jack Cranston, author of this new and welcome book, been himself a tramway man. Qualified in engineering, he has however, the advantage of a background of family involvement in the construction of several of the Melbourne cable lines. No researcher has been more energetic than

Cranston, and more successful in searching out forgotten material, following up tenuous trails, pursuing contacts and persuading surviving employees to record their own memories.

Moreover, he has the advantage of having inherited some original blue-prints, and of being capable of drafting his own plans and diagrams from technical information recalled and supplied.

The resultant Cranston work is an absorbing blend of history, technical explanation and human involvement in the Melbourne cable system. His book is enriched by a wealth of pictures (many previously unpublished), plans and diagrams, reproductions and quoted extracts. It will answer many a query and will open up many a point for further discussion; it will also throw new light on some aspects of the subject, including the industrial relations of the tramway authority and the personal experience of men working under it.

This new work is likely to spread, more widely than ever before, public awareness of a conspicuous feature of Marvellous Melbourne. Today it may even attract new queues of citizens and visitors to inspect that grandest of relics – the No 1 Cable Tram, superbly restored, which stands on permanent display outside the Museum of Victoria in Russell Street.

June 1988

John Keating

I NTRODUCTION

This book was not written to replace what has already been written about Melbourne's cable tram system, but to add to the existing literature the understanding I gained of its operations firstly, through the close study of blueprints which belonged to my grandfather (a contractor who carried out work for the Melbourne Tramways Trust during the construction of the system) and, secondly, from a series of interviews I conducted with some of the surviving members of the network's workforce.

I have always been a great admirer of the work of John Keating. His book, *Mind the Curve*, is the authoritative work on the history of the Melbourne cable trams, and what I have done is to build on the foundations he laid so well.

My interest in cable trams bloomed on my retirement. I brought my engineer's eye to bear on my grandfather's blueprints and I lent a sympathetic ear to the reminiscences of old men. Listening to their recollections and puzzling over the old technical drawings, I began to realise that I had something to add to the story Mr Keating tells – mostly on the technical side, but also a little on the human side.

I have included in the book a great number of photographs, many not previously published, which either help to explain technical matters or convey the atmosphere of the times.

I hope that people will find what follows as thrilling to read and to look at as I found it to write and assemble. I admire and respect the men who built and operated the Melbourne cable tram system. It was something of which they could be proud. There are few public works anywhere which citizens remember as affectionately as Melburnians remember their cable trams.

Although the old photographs and technical drawings are the main strength of this book, it also serves as a brief history of the system.

Readers who would like a more detailed history than we can provide here are referred to Mr Keating's book which is published by the Melbourne University Press.

Chapter 1

ONCE UPON A TIME . . .

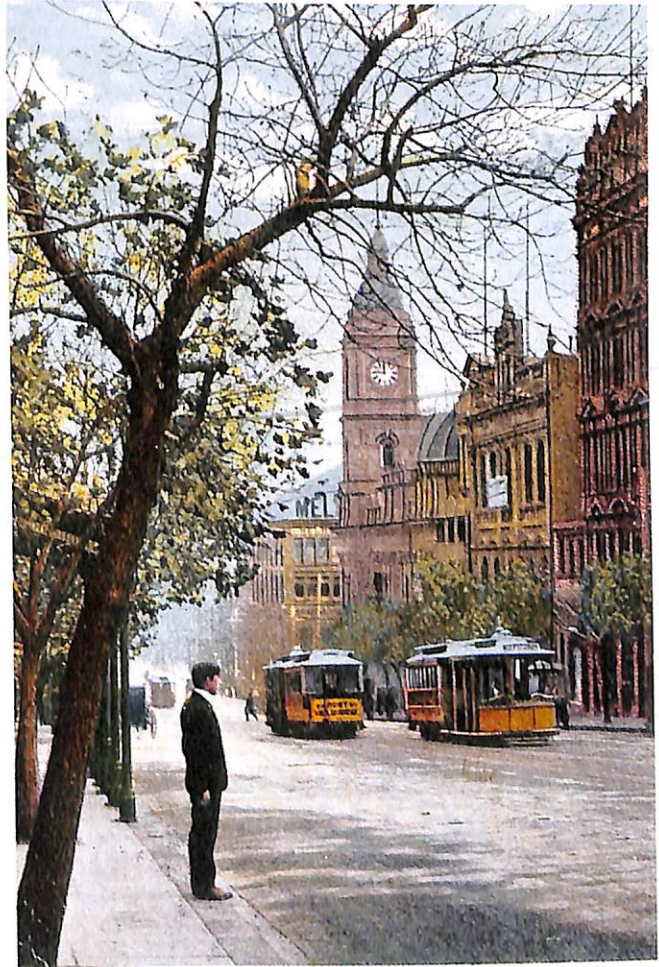
The 1860s and '70s were a period of dramatic growth in Melbourne. During these decades land boomed and fortunes were made. There was enormous civic self confidence. The gold rushes of the 1850s had brought skilled businessmen and artisans to Melbourne and the city had become the financial and manufacturing capital of Australia. However, the wealth of the city and the paucity of its public utilities stood in sharp and eventually intolerable contrast to one another. The broad and stately city streets were congested and an efficient means of public transport was a pressing need.

In 1882, detailed proposals were put before the Victorian Parliament to replace the unsatisfactory medley of hansom cabs, omnibuses and other horse-drawn vehicles with a single road passenger transport system. What was recommended was a horse tram network, complete with haymarkets and stables. Horse trams however were inefficient, cumbersome, dirty, cruel and dangerous. As the following story shows, Melbourne never got an extensive horse tram network. Instead, it got a tramway system, that was mechanical and efficient, clean and silent, and graceful enough to complement the great boulevards of what was one of the most beautiful cities of the world – Marvellous Melbourne.

Men of Perception

“It is fortunate that the projectors of the cable tram in this city were men of perception and observation and have avoided the agony of experiment which other cities have gone through.”

Andrew Smith Hallidie. 1886



Cable trams gracefully complemented one of the great boulevards of what was then one of the world's most beautiful cities.