

*Ottawa's Streetcars: An Illustrated History of Electric Railway Transit in Canada's Capital City.* By Bill McKeown

Gregory Stott

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to contextualize the lumbering story.

In a final, environmentally-oriented chapter titled “Was It Worth Cutting Down All Those Trees?” Lee answers ‘yes.’ Agreement is not unqualified, and he does acknowledge the huge amounts of pollution and wasted wood caused by the cutting. But for Lee the industry did more good than bad. His question is not environmental but, rather, a more local cultural and economic one. From his perspective lumbering created a beneficial foundation for later agricultural and industrial development and has helped shape Ottawa valley culture. Yet it is hard to ignore that the environmental story of forest clearing on this continent – from Maine and New Brunswick to Michigan and Wisconsin, then to the Pacific northwest, and finally to the American south – was driven by insatiable demand for softwood, particularly white pine. It continues in northern Cana-

da today. The Ottawa valley is a part of this larger continent-wide story of resource use and overuse. Lee’s greater acknowledgment here would have been helpful.

All this said, *Lumber Kings and Shanty-men* is a solidly researched work which adds usefully to our understanding of our past. Lee’s presentation is clear and the book is well illustrated and thoroughly indexed, and on the whole covers its subject well. The book adds a needed northern study to the logging history of North America.

Hans M. Carlson  
State University of New York, Plattsburg

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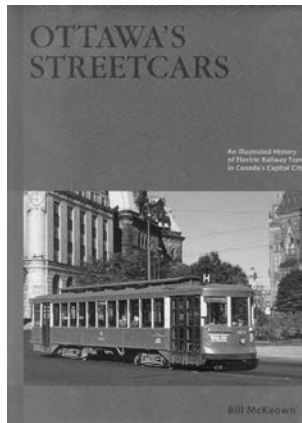
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## Ottawa’s Streetcars

### *An Illustrated History of Electric Railway Transit in Canada’s Capital City.*

By Bill McKeown. Montreal: Railfare DC Books, 2006. 256 pp. \$59.95 hardcover. ISBN 1-897190-07-7.

As the editor’s foreword suggests *Ottawa’s Streetcars* is a labour of love, and the culmination of an Ottawa native’s lifelong fascination with the city and its rail transit systems. Many readers, too, may recollect those days, as late as 1959, of big red streetcars passing the National War Memorial and the leafy bowers of Rockcliffe, or rocking through farmlands to the



Britannia Beach amusement park. This book is full of high-quality photographs that play to one’s nostalgia, and the fact that the research and writing occurred over a number of decades and largely while McKeown lived thousands of kilometres away in Osaka, Japan, provides an enhanced appreciation for his dedication. McKeown, who did not live to see publication of the

book, provides a thorough coverage of Ottawa's street-railway transit system from its earliest origins in the late 1860s as a series of horse-drawn omnibuses and sleighs. He carries the story into the era of electric cars, starting in the 1890s, and follows it through more or less chronologically to the phasing out of the electric railway after World War II under the Ottawa Transportation Commission. While not central to the work, a discussion of the re-emergence of rail transit in Ottawa at the start of the twenty-first century figures in one of the appendices.

McKeown provides important insights into the way that electric railways were shaped by, and in turn helped shape, the city and its patterns of growth and change. What looks today like solid ground between the National War Memorial and the Chateau Laurier hotel has lurking within its history and archaeology the Sappers Bridge (connected to Sparks Street), the Dufferin Bridge (connected to Wellington Street), a towpath along the Rideau Canal, and the tracks of the Hull Electric and Canadian Pacific railways. A dozen superbly reproduced photographs from the National Archives collection and the lesser-known City of Ottawa Archives bring this sequence of planning and development vividly to life. Urban landscape enthusiasts will find the pictures in this book a particular treat.

Chapter Four examines the relationships, at times poisoned, between street railway owners and officials, City Hall, and the public at large. The City of Ottawa Passenger Railway, Ottawa Electric Railway, Hull Electric Railway, and even the Morrisburg and Ottawa interurban proposal of 1908 all created political and planning tensions. Everyone wanted a piece of the action in this complex interprovincial urban area with its multiple layers of bureaucracy. Railway freight on Ottawa streets was one irritant and short-lived (around

1900), thanks to the protests of influential residents of Sussex Street. Negotiations and plebiscites over the issue of public ownership of the Ottawa Electric Railway, and the sometimes tense and divisive labour relations, put the experience of Ottawa into a larger North American context. Ottawa set a standard for snow removal, stabling a fleet of plows and sweepers, plus Model 'T' trucks, and even sleighs that continued in use until 1945. It ran cars carrying the Royal Mail, and furnished unique equipment when royalty visited the capital. But the continuous battles over fares, shared responsibilities for maintenance, and other difficulties ultimately culminated in the city's assumption of ownership following World War II. Ottawa has had unique public transport challenges, and the electric system really looked archaic when the lines closed down in 1959.

*Ottawa Streetcars* is filled with stories, great and small, related to the transit system. McKeown explores the persistent legends about the absence of the number 7 on the company's vehicles, and provides a dozen appendices: lists of rolling stock, written recollections, photocopies of corporate agreements, and more. Trackage and route maps are scattered through the text. He describes Britannia Beach park, an urban recreational site served by streetcars for nearly sixty years. Cars ran to the Rockcliffe rifle ranges for a shorter period, catering to another specialized audience.

*Ottawa Streetcars* should prove invaluable for anyone examining the development of transit systems in other Canadian cities. Based upon thorough primary and secondary research, the work exhaustively details the minutiae of developments in the technological, organizational, and political history of the original Ottawa City Passenger Railway and its successors. While such detail may be slightly overwhelming to the

casual reader, for the avid student of transit systems or those interested in the history of Canada's capital, such detail will enhance the enjoyment of the work. In addition to colourful anecdotes and studies of various personalities involved in the running of the streetcar system, the hundreds of archival photographs, maps, and other material (in black and white and colour) closely complement the text and make for a visually stunning book. Sussex Street at Rideau Hall gate about 1900 is one of the best: horse-drawn carriage waiting in the dusty street (with

bits of litter strewn about) as the open-sided "Chaudiere Falls" car clatters past, passengers dangling dangerously. (p. 79) Readers are in for a visual feast. On the whole *Ottawa Streetcars* provides interesting insights into the broader social and political history of Ottawa for the better part of a century and highlights the importance of transit systems to the Canadian urban experience.

Gregory Stott  
University of British Columbia, Okanagan Campus

## *Port Hope: a History*

By Ian Montagnes. Port Hope, Ontario: Ganaraska Press, 2007. vii + 228 pp. \$29.50 soft-cover. ISBN 0-9781968-0-5.

The launch of this book signals the birth of the Ganaraska Press, the brain-child of Ian Montagnes and his wife Elizabeth Wilson. Montagnes is the former editor-in-chief of the University of Toronto Press and, not surprisingly, he has been able to draw on this experience and his considerable literary and production connections in the execution of this inaugural book. The foreword by fellow Port Hope resident Farley Mowat and the superb photography of John de Visser, along with the book design of Willem Hart, make this a singularly attractive and readable book and set it above many, if not most, of the 'community histories' that form this burgeoning genre.

Comprising twenty-five tightly-focused chapters, *Port Hope: a History* surveys a wide range of topics that track the unfolding of this town from first settlement in 1792 to its modern manifestation in the late twentieth century. At the heart of this narrative is the river, initially called Smith Creek and

later the Ganaraska, and the harbour which formed the river's outlet into Lake Ontario. Port Hope is one of a string of towns on the 'Old Ontario Strand' each of which served a rural hinterland encompassing not only the first tier of counties along Lake Ontario but also the back country districts of Peterborough and beyond. As ports these towns, which included (among others) Cobourg, Grafton, Colborne, Brighton, Trenton, and Belleville to the east, as well as Port Britain, Newcastle, Bowmanville, Oshawa, and

