

## TELL US YOUR HISTORY

Presenter: Colin Seymour  
Session Chair: Ron White

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**Some history reported is better than no history at all!**

### Some Suggestions

- \* Newspaper clippings
- \* Other records/reports
- \* Official records
- \* Employee Magazines
- \* Muscum records
- \* Local reminiscences

[Editor's note:- This presentation was illustrated by overhead projection and exhibits]

### Introduction

My name is Colin Seymour. I am the President of the Australian Electric Transport Museum at St Kilda in South Australia.

I have been the "Museum News" correspondent for 'Trolley Wire' since April 1983. I have also supplied a number of feature articles to 'Trolley Wire' since December 1983.

The purpose of this Presentation is to encourage muscum members to contribute short local historical articles to journals such as 'Trolley Wire' and 'Tramway Topics'.

My concern is that because of the high standards of historical articles and publications by writers such as the late Ken McCarthy and David Keenan in Australia and Graham Stewart in New Zealand in particular, there is a reluctance for other people to contribute historical articles to tramway journals.

I will suggest that:

Some history reported is better than none at all!

Short "less professional" contributions will at least give us a glimpse into the various local tramway histories.

I will suggest various ways to provide short articles with minimal effort while still achieving acceptable journal standards.

So let's look at some suggestions.

### Newspaper Clippings

The first one is Newspaper Clippings. Most Museums have some sort of an archival collection of newspaper clippings gathered over the years. Just a reprint of an article can make interesting reading in itself.

In Adelaide the MTT actually kept huge scrapbooks of any newspaper correspondence about them.

There are many great stories which can be almost reproduced in entirety for minimum effort. For instance, there's the wonderful story from June 1918 of the runaway Prospect tram. Here's a piece from one newspaper:

"Read a small section from the relevant article - refer Appendix A Scrapbook 5/6/18, Pages 299,300,304.

As you can see, the reproduction of this article, not only captures a funny story, but captures the wonderful language on the day.

If you don't have copies of newspaper articles, try your local newspaper office or library. Use historical dates as a starting point.

It takes a long time to sift through 50 odd years of newspaper files, but you only have to start looking to come across an interesting article.

In Adelaide, we are also fortunate to have a scrapbook put together by a member of the Tramway Band from 1909 to 1925.

I was able to use this information to write a recent article for 'Trolley Wire'.

The New Zealanders have produced some wonderful reading for 'Tramway Topics' by reproducing various newspaper articles.

#### Official Records

Another source of articles are official tramway records. Some Museum's have large collections, while others only have bits and pieces. But even documents like old annual reports can provide interesting information.

#### Museum Records

When we talk about old records, don't forget your own Museum records - after all, some of us have been going longer than some Tramway systems.

Even old Museum newsletters can provide interesting information.

#### Other Records and Reports

This includes various reports about trams by other organisations or people or publications as distinct from official tramway records.

A few years ago, a visitor to St Kilda who had worked for the MTT during the Green Goddess trolley bus experiment in the early 1930s donated his speech notes from a presentation he gave at the time about the trolley bus experiment. The notes include many diagrams and technical information. An edited version of this is currently being turned into a Trolley Wire article.

#### Employee Magazines

Many tramway authorities produced employee newsletters or magazines. In Adelaide, the MTT began publishing 'Among Ourselves' in 1946.

This was a period in Adelaide when many of the first employees of the Trust when it was formed in 1907 were retiring after 40 years of services. The magazine captures their reminiscences of the early electric and the horse tram days. There are many stories in this journal which make fascinating reading. At least one article could be devoted to humorous tramway employee stories.

#### Local Reminiscences

And don't forget some of your local identities, or tramway employees, or even some of your Museum visitors. The memories may be fading, but you can often check on dates and locations. Another person may be able to confirm the tale. The main thing is that you qualify your article with words like: "as recalled by ..." or "according to".

Now I'd like to mention a little something which can really add to certain articles - sketch maps. How many times have you read about a particular tram line, or a museum, but cannot picture where it is in relation to a central point.

Once again, I believe that some sort of map is better than none at all - just a simple sketch to give us a better understanding. Of course, for more detailed historical works, a professional map is essential, but for short magazine articles, a sketch map can really help.

### Conclusion

So there are many fairly easy ways to provide us with a few pages of your history.

But I must make one very important point. Always get your article checked by one of your museum experts. A few obvious errors can really detract from a good story.

So how is it? Just give us a few pages of your local history. Just tell us your history, so it's not lost forever. Remember:

Some history reported is better than none at all!

Editor's Note:- Mr Seymour's paper also included a quantity of Attachments. It is felt that they cannot be included as part of this publication due to the constraints of space reasonably available in this volume. Anyone interested may care to contact the Presenter direct.

### Questions

Lewis Nyman: Position re Copyright in reprinting old articles.

Answer: Acknowledge where information arose but print in any case. Use supplemental data if it comes to hand which may amplify/clarify an earlier article.

Richard Gilbert: Suggests trade union publications can provide input from former employees. Make use of maps to clarify location of story as published.