

Milwaukee #17



Type: Wooden Horsecar

Acquired: 2003

Built: 1880s

Seats: ~22

(Bench seating)

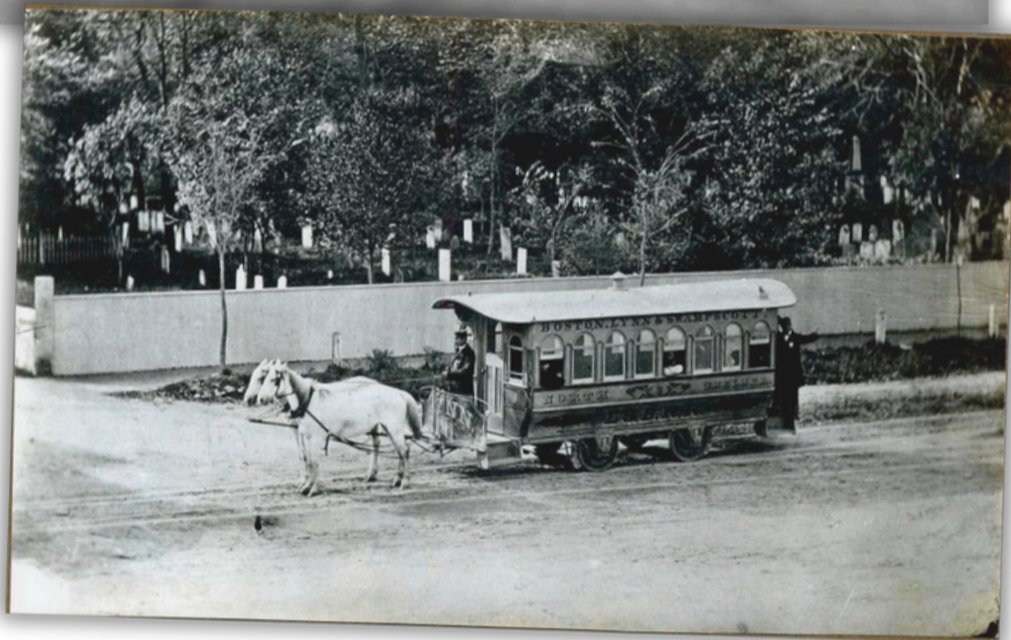


During the mid-1800s, transit systems came into existence and quickly became vital to the development of urban areas across the world. On May 30, 1860, the first horsecar crossed the Milwaukee River, bringing simple and affordable public transportation to Milwaukee for the first time. These horsecars were wooden bodied and were pulled on railway tracks down the streets and alleys. The term "horsecar" derived from the power source of the line: teams of able-bodied steeds.

Car 17 was built for the Milwaukee Street Railway Company in the 1880s by Jones. The car was a slightly more modern and sturdy design than the older cars, and was larger. The car has two parallel benches that run the length of the car along the walls.



While less tiresome than walking, the horsecars were crude and slow. In the 1880s, the electric traction motor was invented, and street railways were rapidly electrified, with electric trolleys and interurban railroads



Horsecars used to operate in cities across the country

becoming extremely prevalent in America. The new electric trolleys were faster, quieter, and much warmer. Trolley systems were expansive, and the horse manure that dirtied streets and polluted rivers was no longer a problem.

Being outdated technology, most horsecars were scrapped or left in fields to slowly rot away, while others became sheds and a part of buildings. Car 17 is the only surviving Milwaukee horsecar that was saved. In 2003, the car was acquired by the East Troy Railroad Museum, which operates on the final surviving segment of Milwaukee's electric railways (a former interurban line). The car was refurbished and painted green before it was put on a trailer and towed in local parades. There were eventually problems with the frame, so the car's body was moved to a storage barn in Mukwonago, where it remains to this day.

