

# TMER&T #978



Type: Streetcar

Built: 1928

Seats: 55

Length – 45' 0"

Width – 8' 8"

Height – 12' 0"

Weight – 39,020 lbs.



During the early 20th century, electric trolley and street railway systems plied the city streets, parks, and alleys of most cities and towns in America with a population of 10,000 or more. Milwaukee, being an important railway and industrial town between the large hub of Chicago and the iron-driven towns in the north, was experiencing rapid growth during this time. In 1860, the first street railway opened, using horses which pulled small wooden cars through the streets and across the rivers. In 1889, it was evident that due to advancing technology and an increasing demand for public transportation, the street railways were electrified, and modern trolley cars were built.

During the 1920s, more modern, faster, and larger streetcars were built and added to the Milwaukee Electric Railway and Light Company's (TMER&L) roster. The TMER&L ordered the 800-series in 1920 and the 900-series between 1924 and 1929 to replace the older heavy cars. Both designs were based off of popular double-truck "birney" designs.



Car 978 was part of a 1928 order of cars, many of which operated until the end of streetcar service in March of 1958. The car was designated a "safety" car and was later converted to one-man operation to reduce expenses.



Russ Porter photos

Following the closing of the last line in 1958, the car was sold to a local individual, who moved the car to Wauwatosa for display at a local lumberyard. The buyer moved to California and interest in the car waned until 1960, when it was sold to the Mid-Continent Railroad Museum in North Freedom, Wisconsin. At the time, Mid-Continent was establishing a small collection of electric railway cars, but in 1967 the decision was made to de-accession those cars. The Wisconsin Electric Railway Historical Society (TWERHS), formed to take possession of the electric cars, assumed ownership of 978 and moved the car to North Lake, and later to the East Troy Railroad, which was operating on the last surviving segment of TMER&L trackage. In 1982, the museum sold the car to the Appleton Trolley Museum, which then merged with the East Troy Railroad Museum in 2002. While most of the historic equipment was moved to East Troy, 978 was relocated to a warehouse in Milwaukee. Fundraising for a restoration is underway and the car has been assessed for restoration. The car is one of only five surviving Milwaukee streetcars, and #846 at ETRM is the only one currently operational.



Ed Wilson photo, Herb Danneman collection